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ATTITUDES TOWARD READING OF GRADE SIX STUDENTS IN A LITERATURE-BASED LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

by

(C) Faye Symon

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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SPRING, 1987

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Attitudes Toward Reading of Grade Six Students in a Literature-Based Language Arts Program" submitted by Faye Symon in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Joyce Edwards
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David Duffy

Mary M. Jones

Date: April 6, 1987

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the attitudes toward reading of grade six students enrolled in a literature-based language arts program. The class was observed over a period of four months, and six students of different ability levels were chosen to provide extra information via interviews and examination of their notebooks. Interviews with the teacher and four parents furnished additional information.

In order to arrive at a holistic picture of the students' feelings and understandings about literature, a qualitative approach was used. The researcher generally adopted the role of passive participant. (Spradley, 1980, p.59)

The characteristics of the language arts program that seemed to be most significant were use of whole language approach, group discussions of novels, teacher's oral reading and interest in children's novels, and a readily accessible display of novels in the classroom.

Students seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss novels and frequently talked of their own experiences that were similar to the events in the

novel being read. These discussions seemed to clarify misunderstandings and help students empathize with characters in the book.

All of the students in the program had difficulties choosing books, frequently relying on their teacher and friends for assistance in this area. Many of the students also commented on how the amount of noise and distractions in the room made it difficult for them to concentrate on their reading. Despite these problems, all of the students had read numerous novels during the year.

The students in this program seemed to have a positive attitude toward reading. This type of language arts program seems to deserve more consideration than it has been receiving.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> If we teach a child to read, yet develop not the taste for reading, all of our teaching is for naught. We shall have produced a nation of "illiterate literates" - those who know how to read, but do not read. (Charlotte Huck)

"A positive attitude toward reading on the part of the student must be present before the goal of making students lifetime readers can be realized." (Kennedy and Halinsky, 1975, p. 519)

The importance of attitudes toward reading has often been recognized. In 1971, Estes wrote that "how students feel about reading is as important as whether they are able to read, for, as is true for most abilities, the value of reading ability lies in its uses rather than its possession." (p. 135) This statement is supported by many others (Grambs, 1959; Mangieri, 1974; Alexander and Filler, 1976; Ribovich and Erickson, 1980; Saracho, 1984). Attitudes toward reading may also affect how quickly students learn (Mill, 1960) and how well students learn (Mill, 1960; Greer, 1972; Quandt, 1977; Morgan and Culver, 1978; and Fredericks, 1982).

This study is an attempt to arrive at a holistic understanding of children's attitudes toward and about

reading in the hopes that better understanding will contribute to instructional practices that cultivate positive attitudes.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to reach a better understanding of students' attitudes toward and about reading and their interactions with literature in a literature-based language arts program. It is hoped that this study will offer insight into children's reading attitudes and how these attitudes are affected by the type of language arts program they participate in.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research project focuses on several questions.

1. How is the language arts period organized?

2. What are the children's attitudes toward themselves as readers? For example, do they see themselves as able readers capable of evaluating the quality of a novel?

3. What is the nature of student interactions with the reading materials? How do they relate the material they read to their own lives?

4. How do the students feel about language arts and particularly about reading? How are these attitudes reflected in their work habits, their talk, and their leisure activities?

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used:

Attitude toward reading: Teale (1980) defines attitude toward reading as the "disposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to reading" (p.87). This definition encompasses several different constructs. Teale and Lewis (1981) break attitude into three components: Individual Development, Utilitarian, and Enjoyment. Individual Development refers to reading done for the purpose of gaining insight into life experiences. Utilitarian refers to reading related to success in school and on the job. Any reading done purely for enjoyment fits into the third component. The terms attitudes toward reading and reading attitudes are used interchangeably.

Literature-based Language Arts program: A language arts program that uses children's literature (i.e. trade books) as the instructional material.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to gain insight into children's attitudes towards reading. The researcher observed one upper elementary classroom where the language arts program was literature-based. Data was collected using direct observation in the classroom and library and written field notes were kept. A tape recorder was also used whenever possible. These observations were supplemented with formal and informal interviews with a number of the students and the teacher, and an examination of documents pertaining to the children such as lists of books read, comments about these books, and exercises completed.

The researcher adopted the role of passive participant, defined by Spradley (1980) as one who is "present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other people to any great extent." (p. 59) From this position inferences were made from students' behavior. These inferences were later supplemented by formal and informal interviews focussing on the participants' motives, intentions, and interpretations.

Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence method of accomplishing participant observation was

used. This sequence involves observing and asking ethnographic questions, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing the research report. Spradley states that this procedure should be treated as a cycle since the analysis of data and the writing of the report lead to new questions.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Spradley (1980) indicates that we need to deal with three fundamental aspects of human experience: cultural behavior, what people do; cultural artifacts, the things people make and use; and cultural knowledge, what people know. He states that cultural knowledge is of fundamental importance and that it exists at two levels of consciousness: knowledge that is explicit and that people are aware of, and tacit knowledge that is outside people's awareness. Tacit knowledge must be inferred through observing cultural behavior, use of cultural artifacts and listening to what people say (speech messages). (p. 10)

"Analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns." (Spradley, 1980, p. 85) In analyzing

the data for this research, Spradley's technique of domain analysis, a search for categories of meaning; taxonomic analysis, a search for the way cultural domains are organized; componential analysis, a search for the attributes of terms in each domain; and theme analysis, a search for relationships among domains; were used.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In 1969, Hansen noted that "Little research has been done which investigates what factors in a child's life significantly affect his attitude toward reading and his ability to read." (p. 18) Saracho (1984) and Levine and Singleton (1983) have recently noted the same lack. Furthermore, the vast majority of such studies depend on quantitative assessment in the form of various reading attitude scales. Levine and Singleton state that "Qualitative research...can enhance understandings already established in research and measured by standardized instruments." (p. 2) It is hoped that this study will help broaden our understanding of affective factors influencing children's reading.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have long been concerned with students' attitudes toward reading. In 1959, Grambs stated "Teachers, surely, would like to know why reading activities, though indulged in for twelve years of a student's life, do not result in continued reading on the part of many." (p. 218) This review of the literature will examine the nature of attitude towards and about reading, assessing reading attitudes, the importance of reading attitudes, and program development to improve reading attitudes.

THE NATURE OF ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

Before 1975, most studies did not clearly define attitudes toward reading. Teale and Lewis (1981) suggest that:

> It seems likely that this lack of definition has occurred because it is generally felt that the nature of the construct is quite obvious and straightforward. As a result it has more or less been taken for granted that an individual has an attitude toward reading and that this attitude can be located at some point on a positive-negative continuum. (p.95)

It has, however, become apparent that the construct of attitudes toward reading needs to be clearly defined.

Teale (1980) defines attitude toward reading as the "disposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to reading" (p.87). This definition, however, encompasses several different constructs. Teale and Lewis (1981) broke attitude into three components: Individual Development, Utilitarian, and Enjoyment. Individual Development refers to reading done for the purpose of gaining insight into life experiences. Utilitarian refers to reading related to success in school and on the job. Any reading done purely for enjoyment fits into the third component. Teale and Lewis (1982) found that although these constructs seem to be valid for secondary students, students in grades one to six do not appear to differentiate between items on the Individual Development and Utitilitarian scales.

Wallbrown, Brown, and Engin (1979) broke reading attitudes into eight dimensions.

> Expressed Reading Difficulty measures the extent to which students perceive of themselves as having difficulty with reading and are willing to acknowledge the existence of a problem; Reading as Direct Reinforcement measures the extent to which students perceive of themselves as receiving direct, extrinsic reinforcement from their friends, classmates, parents, and teachers for

> reading-type activities; Reading as Enjoyment measures the extent to which students perceive of themselves as valuing reading-type activities for their intrinsic value as a source of information, learning, and emotional satisfaction which is independent of outside influence; Alternative Learning Modes measures the extent to which students prefer to use alternatives other than reading when they are faced with a learning task; Reading Anxiety measures the extent to which students become emotionally upset and/or experience unpleasant physical sensations or feelings when engaging in or thinking about reading-type activities; Reading Group measures students' attitudes toward their reading group and the instructional materials used in that group. Silent vs Oral Reading measures the relative preference of students for silent reading activities as opposed to activities which require oral reading; and Comics measures the extent to which students enjoy reading comics and devote their time and energy to this activity. (p.260)

Using the above dimensions and components of reading attitudes allows for an examination of the research literature in terms of whether it is dealing with the reading interests of students or the way in which they do or do not value reading.

For the purposes of this research, the definition by Alexander and Filler (1976) will be used. "Attitudes will be considered to consist of a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation." (p.1)

MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

Attitudes are mental constructs. They cannot be seen and cannot be measured directly. Because of this they are difficult to measure. Pierson (1984) suggests that some of the problems are a degree of ambiguity within the construct, that attitudes tend to be unstable and to lack evaluative consistency, and that "attitude toward reading is a multivariate construct which tends to be measured in a univariate way." (p.365)

Many measurement techniques have been devised to measure attitudes toward reading, but all of these have weaknesses. Teale (1980) states that the best way is to gather data by using more than one source and then to interpret the data by cross-checking. (p.92)

Observation

It is frequently agreed that observation is one of the most valuable ways to assess reading attitudes. (Alexander and Filler, 1976, Healy, 1965, Heathington and Alexander, 1978, Saracho, 1984, and Teale, 1980) Some of the strengths of this method are that it can be used unobtrusively over an extended period of time, no reading or writing on the part of the student is involved in the assessment, and that it

examines significant behaviors. The greatest weakness of this method is that its accuracy is highly dependent upon the skill of the person doing the observing.

Being aware of how parents, children, and teachers assess attitude toward reading should be helpful in deciding what behaviors to observe to determine students' attitudes toward reading. Ransbury (1973) completed a study where she had sixty fifth and sixth grade children, their parents and their classroom teachers complete a questionnaire asking them to describe the reading behaviors of one person who apparently enjoyed reading and the behaviors of one person who did not seem to like to read. She found that the children judged attitude toward reading by listening to verbal statements about reading and the amount of reading material possessed. Parents judged reading attitudes by the frequency in reading and the diversity of materials read, and the teachers judged the child's attitude toward reading mostly by the child's intelligence. Being aware of how parents, children and teachers assess attitude toward reading should be helpful in forming and assessing observational checklists used to determine students' attitudes toward reading.

Self-Report Instruments

Self-report instruments may take one of several formats; interviews, questionnaires, activity preference techniques, or reading attitude scales. Some of the advantages of these methods are that they are quicker and easier than using observation; with the exception of interviews, they are easier to score; and they usually do not require special training for proper use. On the other hand, there are limits to what information these instruments can reveal, and students tend to tell teachers or researchers what they think teachers or researchers want to hear. The students' responses may also vary dependent upon how they feel on a particular day.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

> If one endorses the premise that a primary goal of a teacher is to produce a competent reader and one who becomes a lifetime reader, then now is the time to reflect upon the following question: Of what value is it to provide students with the skill to read, if in the process, we destroy their will to read? (Mangieri, 1974, p.4)

Several studies have addressed the question of what makes a person a lifetime reader. Robinson and Haase (1980) gained insight into this question by interviewing older readers. They noted that retirement did not bring significant changes in previous reading

practices and that "among those older people who indicated reading had been a significant part of their lives there almost always was reference made to a classroom teacher's influence on developing this love for reading early in life." (p.2) Buswell as quoted by Ribovich and Erickson (1980) studied the reading habits of men in a home for retired veterans. She found that it was impossible to get men who did not read interested in any kind of book and, therefore, concluded that reading in old age is a continuation of lifetime reading habits. Ribovich and Erickson interviewed thirty retired persons in regards to their reading habits. They found that attitudes toward reading during childhood and adolescence were similar to those during the middle years, and that the quantity of reading during later years was similar to that during childhood. During the middle years, the quantity of reading seemed to drop, possibly because of other commitments. They also found that a more positive attitude toward reading seemed to correlate with an increase in education and whether the person had had a professional or nonprofessional job. It appears, then, that attitudes developed during childhood and adolescence may affect a person's reading habits for the remainder of one's life.

In addition to having an effect on lifetime reading habits, attitudes toward reading seem to have some relationship toward reading achievement. Mill (1960) states that students who are positively oriented toward the subject matter will work "with greater vigor, learning more, more quickly." (p. 213) Morgan and Culver (1978) support this by stating that "internally controlled students make the greatest gains in reading achievement." (p. 404)

Cramer (1980) looked at the relationship between mental imagery, reading attitude, and comprehension of 124 eleventh and twelfth grade students. By using a standardized reading comprehension test and attitude survey, he found that there was a positive correlation between comprehension scores and reading attitude scores. Irwin (1979) did a very similar study with college students, and he also found a positive correlation between reading ability and attitude toward reading ($p<.001$).

Some studies have indicated that there is no relationship between reading ability and attitudes toward reading. Parker as quoted by Dwyer and Joy (1980) identified the ten best and ten weakest readers from classes from grades two to six. She found that there were no significant differences in attitudes

toward reading between the two groups. Greenberg and others as quoted by Alexander and Filler (1976) also found no significant difference between achievement and attitudes in their study of 115 black, fourth grade children from a severely depressed urban area.

There remains some question as to whether improved attitudes lead to improved achievement or whether improved achievement leads to improved attitudes. Askov and Fischbach (1973) studied first and third grade pupils from two schools. They used a reading attitude inventory developed and validated by Askov that had the children choose between pairs of pictures. In eighteen of the thirty pairs, the pupil had to choose between a child reading and a child involved in another activity. The pupils also completed the Word Reading and Paragraph Meaning subtests of the Stanford Achievement Tests. Askov and Fischbach found no correlation between the scores on the Word Reading test and the attitude score, but they did find a positive correlation ($p<.02$) between the scores on the Paragraph Meaning test and attitude score. They concluded that:

> Since it was demonstrated in this study that attitudes toward reading are more positive with improved achievement, programs that focus on improving attitudes are perhaps misplacing their efforts. Since attitudes may become more positive with improved reading abilities - particularly those

> measured by comprehension subtests of standardized achievement tests - perhaps our efforts should most properly be directed to the improvement of reading skills and achievement. (p.4)

Askov and Fischbach did not show a causal relationship in their study and, therefore, their conclusion may be unfounded. Other studies indicate that this may indeed be the case. Bernstein (1972) evaluated the Right to Read program, where children volunteered to stay after school for extra instruction in reading. She found that although the children improved in achievement, they did not improve in attitude toward reading. She suggested some possible reasons for this could be that the attitude test was invalid, that the children were overly enthusiastic at the beginning of the year when the attitudes were first measured, or that the teachers emphasized achievement rather than attitudes.

Other studies indicate that a change in attitude may lead to a change in achievement. In 1959, Johnson (cited by Athey, 1976, p.366) found that categorization of first grade children as "eager" or "reluctant" readers allowed him to predict their reading success in grade two.

Healy (1965) completed a longitudinal study on the effects of changing students attitudes toward reading.

She had originally initiated a program that improved grade five students' attitudes toward reading as determined by using a time-sampling technique, recording the length of time it took an individual to begin reading after play period, observing reading behavior, and through use of a questionnaire. When these students were at the junior high level, Healy again assessed their reading achievement and attitudes toward reading, this time using the California Achievement tests and the number of books read by each student in the first semester of the year respectively. She found a significant difference ($p<.01$) favoring the experimental group both in reading achievement gains and in number of books read. According to this study, an improvement in attitude toward reading in grade 5 led to improved comprehension several years later.

Mathewson (1976) in his discussion of the relationship between attitude toward reading and reading achievement, used five components, attitude, motivation, attention, comprehension, and acceptance. He defines attitude as being based upon evaluative responses to three aspects of reading input: content, form, and format; and motivation is defined as the process of arousing action. He suggests that comprehension is directly affected by attitude and

motivation. "If attitude is favorable and the motivations are appropriate, comprehension works at peak efficiency. If, however, attitude is unfavorable or if motivation is inappropriate or not present, comprehension becomes inefficient." (p.663)

CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

In view of the above research, it becomes apparent that teachers should be attempting to improve students' attitudes toward reading. This will be discussed under three headings: children's comments about reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and the effect of different reading programs on attitudes toward reading.

Children's Comments About Reading

Certainly if we hope to improve children's attitudes toward reading, it is important that we listen to what children have to say about reading. Several recent studies have attempted to do just that. Mendoza (1985) had 520 children aged five to thirteen respond to a questionnaire about reading. She found that the majority of children liked to be read to, preferred to be read to in groups, liked to read to other children, liked to talk about a book after it had been read, and liked to look at a book after it had been read to them. Reiff (1985) had 65 grade three

children complete reading style and reading attitude inventories. She found that although the students generally had a positive attitude toward reading, they preferred playtime and television. Eighty-nine percent of the students preferred a quiet room for reading, 36% thought that reading at school was work, and 62% enjoyed reading at home. This is supported by Brinton (1984) who found that many children found it difficult to read silently at school and preferred to read on their beds or the hearth rug at home. Reiff and Brinton both also found that many children often start a book without finishing it.

In an attempt to determine positive and negative influences on children's attitudes toward reading, Nimon (1981) interviewed 34 good and poor readers from years 5, 6, and 7 in the Australian school system. She found that children rely heavily upon the help of teachers and librarians in choosing books, and that a frequently mentioned positive factor was the influence of a special teacher. Several children mentioned a silent reading period as a positive influence, and several others mentioned oral reading by the teacher to the class as a negative influence. Bruckerhoff (1977) had 191 high school students answer questionnaires about influences on their attitudes toward reading. He

found that frequently mentioned positive influences were teachers who were excited about books, teachers' oral reading to the class, being encouraged to talk about stories, and free reading periods. The negative influences most often mentioned were book reports, reading aloud in round robin fashion, and ability grouping. Johns (1972) and Johns and Read (1972) examined the attitudes of fifth and sixth grade inner-city and suburban students toward teachers' oral reading. In both groups, the majority of the students did enjoy the teacher reading orally, however, the suburban students liked to be read to more than did the inner-city students (significant at the .01 level). It appears that certain behaviors are seen by many children as promoting positive attitudes toward reading.

Neuman (1980) had 313 students from grades three to nine write essays about why they liked to read. In analyzing her results she found six basic reasons for reading: relief from boredom, instrumental learning, escape, cognitive stimulation, convenience of consumption (could choose own time and place), and enjoyment. The most common reasons in grades three to eight were to learn and for enjoyment. In grade nine this abruptly changed, and the most frequent reasons

became escape and relief from boredom. Awareness of the reasons children read should guide teachers when they are making choices about books for children.

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Reading

A review of the literature revealed a limited number of studies examining specifically teachers' attitudes toward reading and how this affects children although this was mentioned indirectly in several other studies.

Heathington and Alexander (1984) surveyed 101 primary classroom teachers in an attempt to assess teachers' perceptions about attitudes and the importance they attach to developing positive attitudes toward reading. They found that while teachers rated attitudes toward reading as second only to comprehension, they spent only 8.6% of their classroom time emphasizing the development of positive attitudes. Furthermore one-third of the teachers made no attempt, even informally, to assess students' attitudes toward reading.

Flanders (1960) engaged in a two year study to determine how the behavior of teachers affects learning in the classroom. He observed 32 grade 7 and 8 teachers teaching in the areas of English, Social

Studies, Math, and Science using time-sampling techniques to determine if the teacher was a direct (gave orders, lectured, criticized) or indirect (used student ideas, questioned, praised) influence. He found that both attitude toward learning and achievement scores were significantly better ($p<.01$) when teachers used indirect rather than direct influence.

Gray (1981) examined the effect of teacher attitude toward reading on students' attitude toward reading. She had specially trained reading tutors work for six weeks with elementary pupils who were having difficulty in reading. Each pupil was asked before and after the six weeks of tutoring how s/he would teach a younger child to read. This study was exploratory in nature and no firm conclusions could be drawn, however, it was interesting to note that at the end of the experiment more of the pupils stressed use of easy, interesting materials, oral reading by the teacher, and a positive self-image.

In Ransbury's study (1973), however, the teacher was not seen by the parents, teachers, or students as an important influence upon reading attitude of the students. Ransbury suggested that perhaps this resulted from the expectation that it is the home

environment that provides the will to read, while the school's main task is to teach the children how to read.

More research is needed before we can say with conviction that teachers' attitudes toward reading will affect their students' attitudes, but early research indicates that this may indeed be the case.

The Effect of Different Programs on Attitudes Toward Reading

In reviewing the literature, many articles can be found discussing programs that will improve students' attitudes toward reading, however, little research has been completed to indicate whether these claims are justified. Rupley et al (1982) state that:

> Teachers labor under the unfortunate assumption that the major task of motivating students to read can be accomplished by providing activities aimed at making reading more fun or interesting. The efficacy of such an approach is questionable, precisely because students differ in how they react to such activities. Some students may approach the task with enthusiasm, others may avoid it entirely, and some may be indifferent about it; these differences are illustrative of what is meant by the concept of motivation. (p. 143)

In other cases programs which common sense and the current beliefs indicated would be a positive influence

have since been tested and the claims found to be unjustified.

Gurney (1966) used the SRA individualized reading program for fourteen weeks to induce more positive attitudes toward reading in fourth grade students. The control group used the more common basal reader approach. Reading achievement was determined by a standardized test (Gates Reading Survey) and reading attitude was measured using a reading attitude survey where 39 activities were paired with reading and students were asked to choose the preferred activity. Pre- and post-tests were given. Gurney found that while there was no significant difference in reading achievement, there was a difference in attitude toward reading, however, this difference may have been caused by factors other than those that were controlled. The difference in attitude was caused as much from an increased negative attitude on the part of the control group as from an increased positive attitude on the part of the experimental group. The experimental group were visibly proud of the distinction of being the only class in the school using the SRA Laboratory which may have affected their response on the attitude survey and may also have affected the response of the control group.

Askov (1970) also did a study to determine whether a year long individualized reading program would improve achievement and attitudes toward reading. His experimental group participated in a skill development program where each child worked with materials at his/her instructional level in order to acquire the skills that s/he needed to progress to more difficult materials and more complex skills. Individual folders, in which the skills were outlined sequentially, provided a record of each child's skill development. Reading achievement was determined by using a standardized reading test, and attitude was measured by using Askov's Reading Attitude Inventory. Askov found no significant difference either in achievement or attitude toward reading and suggested that it may take more than one year of this program to significantly affect these variables.

In 1972, Levenson (as cited by Alexander and Filler, 1976) compared the attitudes of 30 sixth graders from high reading groups with 30 sixth graders from low reading groups and found significant differences between the two groups. He concluded that ability grouping may contribute toward negative attitudes toward reading.

Seaton and Aaron (1978) attempted to improve attitudes toward reading by using positive reinforcement scheduling. Twenty teachers and 543 grade three through seven students took part in this study. Teachers were asked to reward good reading practices by using praise, peer recognition, physical proximity, and facial attention. Students were pre-tested using Estes Attitude Scale and were post-tested, using the same test, three months later. Teachers were rated by using trained observers immediately after the teachers' initial training and again just before post-testing of the students. Results indicated no significant correlation between the teachers' reinforcement schedule and pupils' attitude toward reading.

Although the above studies did not result in significant improvements in attitude toward reading, other programs have succeeded.

Healy (1965) used different instructional practices in her own grade five classroom during three consecutive years, the first year being a pilot study. The Weekly Reader silent reading test was given in January and May of each year to determine if there was any significant difference in achievement level between classes. Changes in attitude were assessed by using a

time-sampling technique measuring the length of time it took a student to start reading after playtime, by observing reading behavior, and by use of a questionnaire. One group of students (Plan A) were allowed to choose reading groups according to interest, select reading materials from a wide variety, elect child leaders on a rotating basis, and plan creative activities. Plan B students were grouped according to ability, were permitted to select own reading material, and were assigned individual or group projects. Healy found that the Plan A students made significantly better gains ($p<.01$) in both reading achievement and attitudes. As mentioned earlier, two years later the Plan A students were still scoring significantly higher than their counterparts in both achievement and number of books read.

Bullen (1970) tried using a books exposure program to supplement the basal reader program. For one year volunteers worked with children from grades one to five for thirty to sixty minutes a week involving them in activities which included reading to them, field trips to the local library, drama, and creating their own books. The students' attitude toward reading was assessed by using a questionnaire where students were asked to select preferred activities from a number of

choices. Bullen found that this program resulted in a significant improvement in attitudes toward reading.

Another instructional practice that seems to improve attitude toward reading is sustained silent reading (SSR). Bartelo (1979) incorporated ten minutes a day of SSR into her daily instructional practices with students in the grade six to eight compensatory reading program, a program for students whose reading level was judged to be two or more years below grade level. Students were allowed free selection of reading material and the teacher served as a model of reading. The remainder of her program emphasized vocabulary development, comprehension, study skills, and functional reading. Bartelo noticed an attitude change in 81% of her students and their improvement in achievement as measured by a standardized reading test was significant ($p<.01$).

Many other studies have looked at the effects of the SSR program. Sadoski (1980) in his review of the literature on this topic cites LaBrandt's 1936 longitudinal study of 57 high school students enrolled in a free reading program. Twenty-five years later he found that the same subjects as adults were still motivated and active readers. Sadoski also reports that the most positive effect of SSR seems to be in

improving attitudes rather than in achievement. Moore, Jones, and Miller (1980) in their review of the literature on SSR, indicate that SSR leads to improvement in both attitudes and achievement but that changes in achievement are not noticeable in studies that last for only a few months.

Rehder (1980) examined the effects of an eighteen week high school course where students were required to read nine paperback books from a teacher-chosen selection. Students were required to complete one or more assignments and pass an objective test for each book read. Book conferences were held for groups of four to six students. Students reported their own attitudes toward reading both before and after the course. Before the course well over half the class reported that they did not read for enjoyment at all, but afterwards a similar number indicated that the most valuable part of the course had been to learn to enjoy reading.

Manning and Manning (1984) compared three models of recreational reading: sustained silent reading, peer interaction in which students interact with their peers about their reading, and individual teacher-student conferences about students' reading. Their sample included 24 teachers and 415 hetergeneously grouped,

grade four students. A reading attitude inventory was developed and administered to the students at the beginning and the end of the year. The reading subtest of the California Achievement Test was used to assess reading achievement. All three groups allowed students to select their own materials and pace of reading. All three experimental groups made better gains in both achievement and attitude than the control group, however, the students in the peer interaction group obtained significantly higher gain scores ($p<.01$) in both achievement and attitude than the students in the other experimental groups. Smith and Gallo (as reported by Squire, 1969) support this finding by indicating that discussing a book with peers is highly important in encouraging young people to read.

From the above research, it is apparent that some reading programs are effective in improving attitudes toward reading. More research is needed to determine the most beneficial instructional practices.

SUMMARY

Several patterns seem to emerge in reviewing the literature. It appears to be important that materials that appeal to students be used. Eller (1959) states that "one of the best ways in which a teacher can

reward and strengthen a pupil's interest in reading is through personal effort to locate materials which will be likely to appeal to the pupil." (p. 120) Cooter and Alexander (1984) concur with this statement by telling teachers to "insure a proper match between interests and materials" (p. 100) The importance of using appealing materials is also supported by Belloni and Jongsma (1978), Crawley and Mountain (1981), Groff (1962), and Ransbury (1973).

"Exposing students to reading activities beyond the basal text is crucial in developing positive attitudes towards reading." (Fredericks, 1982, p. 39) This statement is widely supported. (Bartelo, 1979; Bruckerhoff, 1977; Bullen, 1970; Eller, 1959; Healy, 1965; Moore, Jones, and Miller, 1980; Nimon, 1981; Rehder, 1980; and Sadoski, 1980) It seems that in order to best promote positive reading attitudes we must encourage students to read other materials in addition to or instead of basal readers.

Students should be allowed to share their reading experiences with peers and adults. Bullen (1970), Healy (1965), Manning and Manning (1984), Mendoza (1985), Rehder (1980), Sadoski (1980), and Squire (1969) all have found that sharing book experiences helps to improve attitude toward reading.

Other instructional practices that should help to improve reading attitudes are: using materials in which the students can succeed (Alexander and Filler, 1976; Gray, 1981), oral reading to students (Bruckerhoff, 1977; Johns, 1972; Mendoza, 1985; and Nimon, 1981), avoiding round robin reading (Bruckerhoff, 1977; Nimon, 1981), and avoiding ability grouping (Bruckerhoff, 1977; Healy, 1965).

Reading is an important part of many adults' lives. By helping children see reading as an enjoyable activity, teachers are introducing them to a pursuit that will be important and useful throughout their lives.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In planning and implementing a research project, many decisions about methodology and design must be made. Each of these decisions affect, both directly and indirectly, the outcome of the study.

This chapter will describe the methodological framework for this study as well as the practical implementation of the design.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to describe the nature of a literature-based language arts program and the nature of the students' attitudes toward language arts and their interactions with literature in this program. The research focuses on several questions:

1. How is the language arts period organized?
2. What are the children's attitudes toward themselves as readers? Do they see themselves as able readers capable of evaluating the quality of a novel?
3. What is the nature of student interactions with the reading materials? How do they relate the material read to their own lives?

4. How do the students feel about language arts and particularly about reading? How are these attitudes reflected in their work habits, their talk, and their leisure activities?

GAINING ACCESS

At the beginning of January, 1986, I began visiting classrooms of teachers whom, I had been told, were using literature extensively in their classrooms. After several visits, I found a class that seemed appropriate for my purposes and approached the teacher with further explanations about my study.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) discuss the difficulty in setting oneself up as an 'unknowledgeable observer'. They suggest that "It may be very difficult for the ethnographer to establish credibility if hosts expect some sort of 'expertise'. Such expectations clash with the fieldworker's actual or cultivated ignorance and incompetence." (p. 76) Since using literature is not the usual approach for teaching language arts, I was able to explain that I had not previously had the opportunity to observe such a program, hoping that in this way I could establish myself as an "acceptable incompetent". (Lofland as quoted by Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.89) Ms.

Samuels was involved in promoting her language arts program in her school district and said that she often had visitors in her classroom to observe. She seemed pleased that someone was doing research on this type of language arts program.

I explained further that I wished to be an observer in the classroom for a period of about three months. During this time I hoped for some informal as well as some formal contact with the students so that I could discuss their feelings about the language arts program and about reading and writing. I did not wish to be involved with any discipline. Ms. Samuels assured me that this would not be a problem and suggested that it might be valuable to contact parents about students' behavior at home as well. I found this to be a useful suggestion.

The next step was to gain permission from the principal and superintendent to complete the research in Ms. Samuel's classroom. This was done quickly and easily by phone. Both men seemed pleased to have me do the study, and the superintendent commented, "If you wished to see a good language arts class, you have made an excellent choice."

I approached the students several days later. After explaining what I hoped to do, I sent home a

letter requesting permission for participation from parents and students. These were collected on my next visit to the school.

However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) rightly note, "Access is not simply a matter of physical presence or absense. It is far more than a matter of the granting or withholding of permission for research to be conducted." (p.56) It took several weeks of observation before the teacher and students began to relax and take on more natural roles when I was in the room. For example, I noticed during the first three weeks that when the teacher wished to discipline a student, she would accompany him/her out to the hall, speak a few moments, and then they would both return. Gradually, Ms. Samuels reverted to talking to misbehaving students quietly at their desks, and by the time I had been in the room for six weeks, she would make her comments from wherever she happened to be in the classroom.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Establishing my relationship with the teacher presented few difficulties. She seemed, from the beginning, to accept my role as observational. On one occasion, approximately two months into the study, she

asked if I could give her some feedback about the information I was collecting. I explained that I would be most willing to discuss the information when the data was all collected, but that I would rather not talk about it at that point. Ms. Samuels accepted that and did not mention it again.

Ms. Samuels frequently told me to feel free to talk to the children whenever I chose provided that it wasn't during silent reading time. Because of the way the class was organized, I had more opportunity for contact with the students than I might otherwise have had. Except for the first half hour of the day, which was silent reading for fifteen minutes followed by silent writing for fifteen minutes, the children were encouraged to interact with one another whenever assistance was needed. They moved freely around the room to find a different place to work or to find someone to conference with them about their work. The table I usually sat at was frequently used for teacher-student conferences, for student-student conferences, or as a work place.

The students seemed to accept my constant writing in my notebook as natural. They knew that I was writing a book about their class and occasionally would ask how many pages I had finished. When I explained

that I was not writing the actual book yet, they suggested that I was still brain-storming, something that they were expected to do before and during writing. I agreed that that was basically what I was doing.

At first, students would often change their behavior if they noticed me watching them. For example, students who were talking, but were supposed to be reading, would glance my way, see me watching, and quickly look at their books. I tried to avoid eye contact with these students but that did not help much. Gradually, when it became apparent that I would neither reprimand them nor inform their teacher, the students began to include me in their pranks. They began to smile at me when they knew that I had seen them. One day, Jerry and Mark were having a contest to see who could hold his breath the longest. They held their books as though they were reading so Ms. Samuels would not notice. I inadvertently sat beside them. Jerry looked at me, then Mark, and continued to hold his breath. When he finally had to take another breath, he looked at me and asked if I had ever held my breath for two and a half minutes. Ms. Samuels looked at them at this point, and both boys quickly returned to reading.

Another comment was made late in June. By this time, I had finished collecting data, but I returned for a couple of hours to thank both teacher and students for their help. Just before I left Ken said, "You know, at first I felt uncomfortable when she was in here, but last week, when she wasn't there, I missed her. She's part of the class."

RESEARCH SCHEDULE

My first contact with Ms. Samuels was on February 6, 1986. By February 21, permission had been gained from all parties and I was ready to begin my study.

I observed in Ms. Samuels's class three times weekly for a period of fifteen weeks. Twice a week, I observed the language arts class which was held during the first hour and a half of every day. At these times I arrived fifteen minutes before class and stayed for recess so that I could observe the children during their free time. I attended the students' library class which was a half hour once a week. There were also ten days when I was able to attend the class for the whole day.

For the first month, I observed the class as a whole, spoke informally with the students when I could do so without interfering with their activities, and

interviewed Ms. Samuels both formally and informally. During the second and third months, I focused more on six students, interviewed them both formally and informally, and collected copies of language arts materials that they were working on. I also continued to collect observational and tape recorded data on the whole class. During the fourth month, I continued to focus on these six students, but I also conducted interviews with several parents, and had the class complete a written comment on how they felt about the class.

DATA COLLECTION

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that triangulation of data helps to provide a validation check.

> In social research, if one relies on a single piece of data there is the danger that undetected error in the data-production process may render the analysis incorrect. If, on the other hand, diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, one can be a little more confident in that conclusion. This confidence is well founded to the degree that the different kinds of data have different types of error built into them. (p.198)

In an effort to provide this type of validation check, I gathered several types of data. Extensive field notes and tape recordings were taken of students'

behavior and comments in the class during both instructional time and at recess. Students, parents and teacher were interviewed about the language arts program and the progress and reactions of the students. Children's novel study notebooks, lists of books read, and samples of their writing were collected. Students were also asked to complete a reading attitude inventory and answer, in writing, some general questions about reading.

Field Notes

"There is a sense in which it is impossible ever to record all the data acquired in the course of fieldwork." (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 144) In making any observations there is some selection of what is and is not important.

In order for fieldnotes to be as accurate as possible, it is important that they be written as soon after the action as possible. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that, "The ideal would be to make notes during actual participant observation." (p.146) In most cases, I was able to do this. Because the students wrote frequently throughout the language arts period, they were not upset by my writing. In fact, one day in the library when I was not writing very

much, one boy approached me and sympathized, saying that "Writing all the time is tiring, isn't it?" On some occasions it was impossible to take fieldnotes during the action. For example, while walking to the staffroom or as I was leaving, Ms. Samuels would sometimes make comments that reflected on the study. These comments were recorded as soon as possible, either immediately upon return to the class or in my car.

Tape recordings also were used to gather data. Ms. Samuels had frequent conferences with single students or with small groups of students, and these were recorded as often as possible. The students also regularly engaged in group discussions about novels which I was frequently able to record. Most of the time, three tape recorders were being used simultaneously.

The classroom seating arrangement was organized so that students usually sat in groups of four or five. I tried leaving a tape recorder on these desks to pick up informal discussions amongst pupils, however, they would stop talking whenever the tape recorder was on and would move to another area of the room to talk. I found it more helpful to try to occasionally eavesdrop on these conversations and jot down what I heard.

Fortunately, the students reacted more favorably when taped while participating in an assigned discussion. During group novel studies, students were expected to carry on a discussion about their readings. Again, at first, students seemed uncomfortable with the tape recorders. For example, one day Mark decided to play news reporter with the microphone and would hold it up to each person as they spoke. Obviously, the students had a difficult time concentrating on the conversation. After the tape recorders had been used for a while, however, the conversations became much more natural although I expect students probably stayed on topic more with the tape recorder running that they might have without it. One exception to this was Daryl. I never saw him work well in a group discussion, but when the tape recorder was used, he was much worse. Twice Ms. Samuels had to remove the tape recorder from the group in order to get them back on task. In both cases, the group continued to misbehave even after the tape recorder was removed.

Interviews

Spradley (1979) discusses in detail the procedures for successful ethnographic interviewing. He says that there are two important processes that work together

for a successful interview: developing rapport and eliciting information. "Rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture. Eliciting information fosters the development of rapport." (p.78) Descriptive questions are important in starting interviews and help keep the informant talking. Descriptive questions are asked in order to elicit a general understanding of the topic.

I used mostly descriptive questions in structuring my interviews with the teacher and students. The teacher and the student informants were interviewed formally on several occasions. Each interview was tape-recorded and analyzed before the next interview with that informant.

Unfortunately, parents were not as readily accessible and were only interviewed once. These interviews were conducted after the initial interviews with teacher and students and were somewhat more focused.

Documents

The students were expected to keep a number of records in the course of their regular classwork. Some of these were useful to me. For example, in the front of their novel study notebook was a list of all the

books that had been read, either at home or at school, during the year. Also in this notebook were exercises, summaries, and comments about some of these books. The students were also required to keep a file folder filled with all the writing done during the year. This included brainstorming, rough copies, final copies, and conference notes. References to books were sometimes made in this folder, and the influence of some authors was sometimes apparent in the writing. Students also provided general written comments about the language arts program and reading.

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Throughout this study, observational data was collected by observing the class as a whole, however, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the perceptions, intentions, and attitudes of the students, it was necessary to study in depth a few key informants. Several factors were examined in choosing these informants. Firstly, it was necessary to choose children whose parents were willing to be interviewed. Only nine families were willing to participate to this extent. Secondly, I preferred to choose students who were reasonably articulate and were willing to spend the extra time talking to me. This narrowed the field

to six children. In previous discussions, the teacher had identified three of these children as 'average' students and three as 'above average' students. I selected a boy and a girl from each grouping.

One month into the study, a new student joined the classroom. From his notebooks, it was apparent that he had been previously attending a more traditional type of language arts class. His reading notebook was full of skill development types of exercises and answers to comprehension questions. His language notebook had many grammar and punctuation exercises. According to Ms. Samuels, Daryl had reported not writing any stories this year, nor had he read any books. I decided to include Daryl as one of my key informants since his adjustment to this class could yield valuable information. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggest that one type of important informant is:

> The rookie, who is surprised by what goes on and notes the taken-for-granted things that the acclimatized miss. And, as yet, he may have no stake in the system to protect. (p.116)

I felt that Daryl could fill this role.

Another boy, David, was also added to my list of key informants at about the same time. From the beginning of my study, David would converse with me frequently both about his and my work. When I started

to interview my key informants, David asked me on numerous occasions when I was going to interview him. I decided that I would rather interview him than hurt his feelings.

Neither Daryl's parents nor David's parents were available for interviews.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Spradley (1980) indicates that we need to deal with three fundamental aspects of human experience: cultural behavior, what people do; cultural artifacts, the things people make and use; and cultural knowledge, what people know. He states that cultural knowledge is of fundamental importance and that it exists at two levels of consciousness: knowledge that is explicit and that people are aware of, and tacit knowledge that is outside people's awareness. Tacit knowledge must be inferred through observing cultural behavior, use of cultural artifacts and listening to what people say (speech messages). (p. 10)

"Analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns." (Spradley, 1980, p. 85) In this study,

data collected from observations, interviews, and documents was carefully examined throughout the study. This ongoing analysis led to new questions in the type of cyclical pattern suggested by Spradley (1980): asking ethnographic questions, collecting ethnographic data, making an ethnographic record, analyzing ethnographic data, back to asking ethnographic questions and so on. (p.29)

In this study, the attitudes and perceptions of six students provided the central focus against the background context of a literature-based language arts class.

CHAPTER IV

THE LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

> There are some classrooms where children's responses to literature are livelier and more positive than the average, and where their choices seem to be made with more care. Such places are not just happy accidents. They are carefully structured environments that reflect a teacher's commitment to literature as a natural medium for children's reading and language learning as well as a source of fun and satisfaction. (Hickman, 1983, p. 1)

Hickman goes on to say that the characteristics of these classrooms are: the teacher is excited about children's books, "books are not merely accessible, they are unavoidable" (p. 3), a regular period of sustained silent reading is scheduled, new books are introduced both to the class and to individual students by the teacher, books are the subject of much comment and discussion, and students' work is valued, displayed, and shared.

In the classroom observed in this study, all of the above characteristics were apparent. In this chapter, I will introduce the classroom, the language arts program, and the key informants in the study.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASSROOM

The first thing I noticed when I walked into the classroom was the abundance and proximity of reading materials. A table supporting an array of novels stood near the teacher's desk. Two nonfiction books about the human body were displayed on the blackboard ledge. In the back of the room a bookshelf separated a small corner from the rest of the class. Novels and comics were arranged on its shelves, and books about volcanos and Japan and the Phillipines stood on top of it. A magazine rack and another cupboard filled with books formed the other two sides of this corner. A three-sided cardboard display case of students' 'published' writings stood in one corner.

During the course of my observations, I noticed that the students handled these reading materials frequently. Whenever students were waiting in line to go to another class, some of them could be seen handling books, sometimes only to run their hands over the covers, other times flipping through a book stopping occasionally to examine a picture or notation or to show a friend a particular page. Also when students were finished an assignment, they would often pick up and read or scan a story or report written by a classmate.

Many posters and bulletin boards in the classroom also referred to reading and/or writing. A copy of Where the Wild Things Are was laminated and displayed on one wall. Close to the teacher's desk were posters on plot, setting, and characters, each covered with a mosaic of pictures which were sometimes referred to by students looking for a topic to write about. Posters about the writing process and genres of fiction were also displayed.

During the four months I was visiting this classroom, the books and some of the displays were changed on a regular basis to support the material being studied in social studies, science, and health.

The desks in the classroom were mostly organized in groups of four or five, but sometimes a few students sat by themselves. In the back of the room, two areas were separated from the main part of the classroom. The story corner, furnished with cushions, was an area where students could go to conference with each other or the teacher, to read, or to share a story or book with the whole class. Three carrells, small niches with desks, composed an area where students could work privately and relatively undisturbed. The teacher's desk sat beside these carrells. A table, which was

often used for group conferencing, also stood at the back of the room. (see figure 1)

INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

Ms. Samuels had completed her teacher training in England and had subsequently taught children aged four to nine there for four years. She then moved to Canada where she completed her Bachelor of Arts in Toronto. While in Canada, she had taught for nine years in grades one to six. She was currently teaching Grade 6 in a small town approximately a half hour's drive from a larger city.

Ms. Samuels had developed a language arts program which she hoped would encourage the students to engage in reading and writing with more enthusiasm as well as develop important skills in these areas. She was very interested in children's literature and frequently mentioned new books that she had just read. She indicated that she had already read every novel in the classroom in order to be able to discuss them effectively with the students. Often when students brought books to discuss with her or show her, she would take them home to read, and would discuss them with the student once she was finished. Ms. Samuels

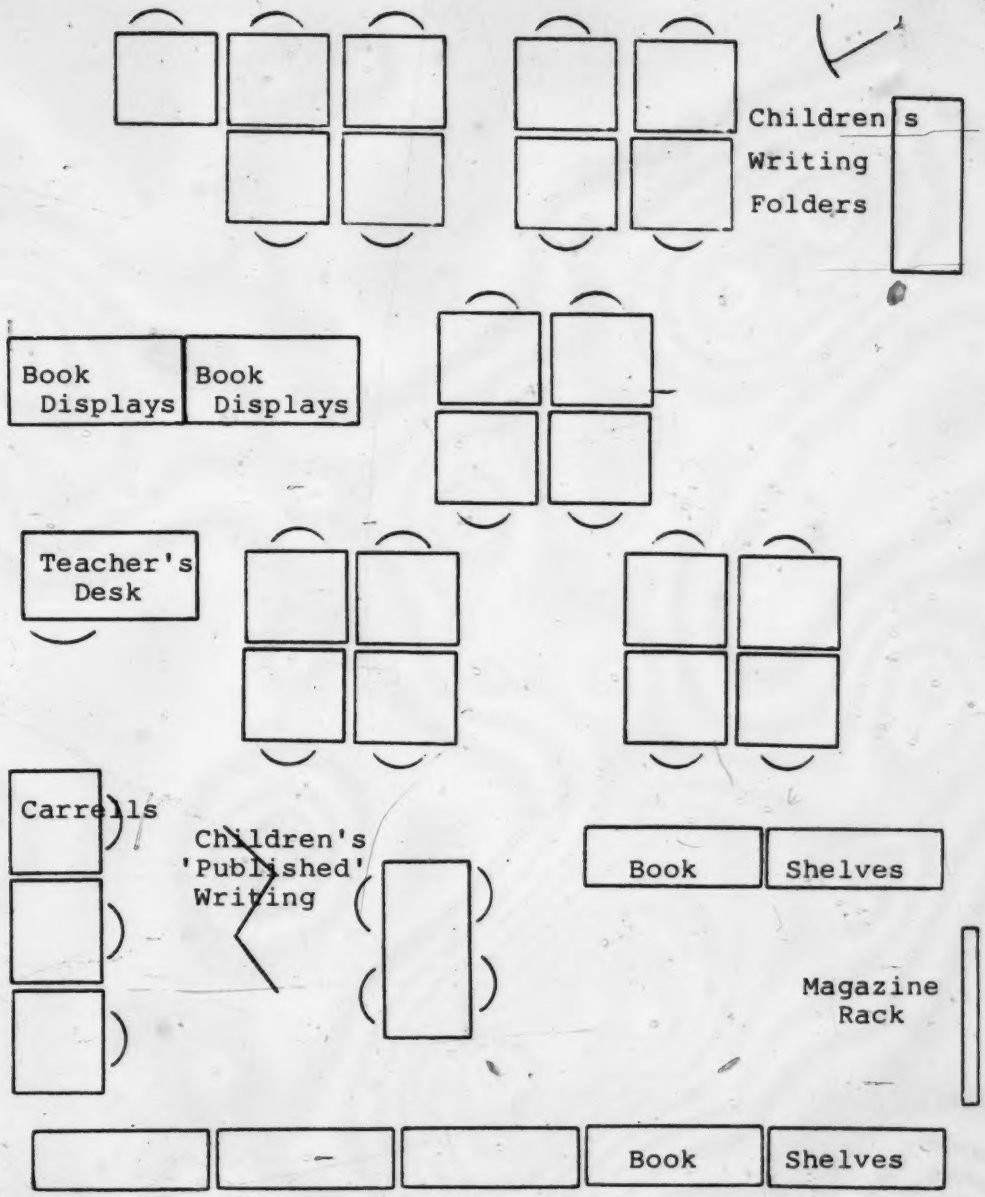

FIGURE 1: The Language Arts Classroom

frequently directed students' attention to particular books that she thought would appeal to them.

The morning language arts period followed a regular pattern. Students went to a central area in the school for a general assembly every morning at 8:55. When they returned to the classroom, usually between 9:00 and 9:05, they would begin a silent reading time which lasted until 9:15. This silent reading period was apparently conventional throughout the school. Students were free to read the material of their choice at this time. Most students would read novels, but others would read stories written by other students, comics, magazines, or look through nonfiction books. Other students would sometimes write, or quietly work or look at something at their desks. This was rarely commented on by the teacher provided that the student was not disturbing anyone. The teacher also usually engaged in reading, although occasionally she would talk quietly to a student or circulate around the room. She told me that she found that the students attended to their reading better if she was also reading. Occasionally, Ms. Samuels would read a short story or introduce new books to the class during this time.

Silent reading was followed by fifteen minutes of silent writing. Students would retrieve their writing folders from a box on a cupboard by the door and continue working on existing writing projects or begin new ones. These writing projects were never assigned. The students chose what to write about, what format they preferred to use, and whether or not they wished to continue with a piece or drop it and begin a new one. During the silent writing period, students were encouraged to work quietly on their own, however, they would frequently confer with each other or Ms. Samuels. These conferences were only interrupted by Ms. Samuels when they became quite noisy or if several students were involved.

Twenty to thirty minutes of general writing followed the silent writing period. During the second part of the writing period, children were free to talk with and help one another provided that they did not become too disruptive. Students were frequently observed reading their stories to a classmate. Other students would sign up for conferences with Ms. Samuels by putting their names on the appropriate area of the blackboard and she then held conferences with as many of them as possible. During these conferences Ms. Samuels would either help the student with the problem

s/he was facing or suggest another student who could help with the problem.

Mobility of the students was encouraged in this class. Students were usually permitted to work anywhere in the class where they felt comfortable and were not disturbing other students. Students felt free to seek assistance from other classmates, from their teacher, or from this observer. It was not uncommon to see a student reading his piece to another student, students conferencing about their writing with each other or the teacher, students writing quietly at their desks or the carrells, and students wandering about the room searching for a topic to write about all at the same time.

Writing period was generally followed by approximately ten minutes of 'sharing', where several students would read their pieces of writing, in various stages of completion, to the class and receive the comments of their classmates. The comments were generally positive, some astute questions were asked, and occasionally a piece of writing was criticized fairly heavily. Ms. Samuels would allow the criticism, but ensured that the student who was sharing the writing had adequate time to respond to all the comments, and that the same criticisms were not

repeated too often. Sharing time was popular, and usually there was not enough time to hear every student who had signed up for that day. Ms. Samuels said that some students wished to share several times a week, which meant that other children would be unable to share. Therefore, sometimes students who had signed up to share that day were required to wait until others who were less eager had taken their turns. Another form of sharing, called Author's Chair, occurred for half an hour every Friday morning. All the grade four, five, and six students in the school would gather in the auditorium and two students from each class would read finished pieces of writing to the group. Two students were chosen to chair these meetings and were the only ones permitted to comment on the pieces read. These comments were generally positive and superficial in nature.

After sharing time, the students worked on novel studies for approximately 25 minutes until recess. Novel studies were of two types, group and individual, generally done on alternate days. In individual novel studies, the students chose any book in the classroom or, with the teacher's approval, a book from the library. They were expected to write a summary and/or a response to the book when they were about halfway

through reading it, and again when the book was finished. Upon completing the novel, the students were also expected to do three activity cards which they chose from a selection of over one hundred samples, or to choose a written format with which to respond to the novel. The majority of the activity cards dealt with reading skills, for example: Find three words that have the prefix 'un'. Find three synonyms. Written responses could include such things as writing a letter to the author, writing a different ending to the story, or writing a poem about the story.

In group novel studies, the teacher would introduce several novels to the class, and students would write down their first, second and third choices. Groups would be selected by the teacher who tried to honor as many choices as possible. Group meetings were held three times a week alternating with individual novel studies, and they usually followed a pattern. Each member was expected to come to the meeting with a summary of the chapter just read and two 'thinking questions' (defined by the class as questions that required more than a one word answer) prepared. Students would read their summaries of the section just completed and discuss answers to the prepared questions. Ms. Samuels was sometimes able to join part

of this discussion. Finally, the group would decide on the amount of reading to complete before the next meeting.

> One student commented, "This year, because you get - well, it's a different sort of program and you get to - to learn more about books and everything. And she (long pause) and you get to - um - group novels and you answer questions and everything that other people ask and you learn more about the questions and the people in the book than you do in the other case [the previous language arts program]."

In the afternoon, the students often had another half hour to work on their reading. This was usually spent in independent work, either on their individual or group novel study.

Ms. Samuels also read to the students every day. Short stories or poems were sometimes read during the course of the day and the last fifteen minutes of the day were always spent reading from the current novel that was chosen by the teacher. While Ms. Samuels was reading, the students would often contribute sound effects, ask questions, make predictions, or read sections together with the teacher. For example, while reading <u>The Owl and the Pussycat</u>, Ms. Samuels held the

book so that the students could see it and they all read together. When reading The Hobbit, the students would often chime in with, "And not for the last time." whenever the author referred to Bilbo thinking about his hobbit hole. The students seemed to enjoy the oral reading sessions. One student commented, "Yeah, it's good because she puts a lot of expression in and it's easy to understand it when she reads it than harder books when we have to read them ourselves."

On Wednesday afternoons, there was a thirty minute library period which was managed by the librarian although Ms. Samuels was usually in attendance. During this time, the students usually either looked for books or free read, but occasionally, the librarian would introduce new books and/or read to them.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDENTS

Jerry

Jerry was an energetic, well-liked twelve-year-old boy. Both his teacher and his mother considered his ability in language arts to be well above average. Before Jerry started grade one, he and his family were members of the Association for Bright Children, and at that time, one of Jerry's stories was published in their magazine.

This was Jerry's second year in grade six, the repeat being at the request of Jerry's parents even though his mother said, "his marks were good and everything." His mother suggested that the reasons for keeping Jerry back were his maturity level and that "he was reading well ahead but not really...able to put it down in words."

Jerry's home environment was quite book oriented. Both parents read regularly and they had read to Jerry when he was younger. His mother mentioned that Jerry was beginning to show an interest in the type of books that his father read, saying that, "He [Jerry] feels that he should read some of the books that Dave [his father] reads. ...He bought a book for Dave just the other day, and Jerry wants to read it." Jerry also

frequently bought books for his own collection, (he had all of the Fighting Fantasy series). Jerry informed me that his collection was rather small but his mother felt it was large. Jerry went to the local public library once a week, but since that collection was small, his parents also took him to the Edmonton public library occasionally.

Ms. Samuels said in an interview,

> "Jerry was fluent and expressive from the minute he came into the classroom. He just loved reading. If anything, he seems to have, not orally reading, but in his enjoyment of books, he seems to have gone down. He - um - at the beginning of the year, he seemed to always have a book in his hand, and yet now I've noticed he a lot of the time doesn't read during silent reading. He wants to write instead. He wanders in and out of the classroom. But he's - his reading itself is fluent and expressive."

However, Jerry's mother indicated,

> "He has really, you know, increased the volume of reading more and can, you know, he goes through a book in a couple of days, and then he's ready to read something else. And, you know, he gets a lot of pleasure out of the reading."

In talking about the program, Jerry said,

> "Well, I like the writing. Sometimes it gets boring and I don't really like the reading very much. I liked it better when we had to - had our - we chose our own novels and we'd just write summaries about them. ... Well now we're sort of like in a group thing, with groups, and we're discussing stuff instead of - um - instead of writing your summaries and passing them in. And the group sometimes doesn't work out too well and so..."

In my observations, I noticed that although Jerry did not read very often in class, he always had a book on his desk, frequently two or three. During the fifteen weeks of my stay, I observed Jerry reading in nineteen different books. From listening to his comments to his friends, teacher, and myself, I believe that he completely read the vast majority of these books.

Rhonda

Rhonda was a tall, somewhat shy eleven-year-old girl who was considered by both her parents and her teacher to be somewhat above average in her language

arts ability. In grade five, Rhonda had participated in a similar type of language arts program.

Rhonda's parents supported the children's reading at home. They had read to their children regularly when they were younger, and encouraged the children to read to them and discuss their books now that they were old enough to read on their own. Her mom indicated that, "(Rhonda's) always saying, 'Mom, let me tell you about this story.' Whatever it happens to be that she's reading, she wants to share with us." Rhonda did not, however, have her own collection of books, nor were there many books in the home. Her mother explained that,

> "We don't have, like a large library ourselves. We feel that there's an adequate [public] library. This is what most of her reading is. Like she will bring home, either from the school or the public library."

Both parents often read before going to bed at night. They were beginning to notice a similar behavior in Rhonda.

Rhonda enjoyed reading.

> "[Books] get me in a good mood and stuff and I can laugh about some of them, and some of them make me sad. I don't know, I like ones that have lots of

feeling in them, where the person talks about their feelings and stuff."

Rhonda's father called her "a compulsive bookworm". I observed that Rhonda frequently read during spare moments during the school day, in the morning before classes started, when she had completed her work, and sometimes at recess.

Rhonda's parents had noticed a recent change in the types of books she read.

Mrs. E: She was a lot into the younger-

Mr. E: Originally-

Mrs. E: younger preteen girl kind of books. Judy Blume, that kind of thing. Now she'd rather-

Mr. E: She dropped them herself. I'd say over the past year.

Mrs. E: Well, even over the past six months I can see a difference, too. She wants something more gripping, with more story to it.

Rhonda had also noticed a change in her reading habits.

Rhonda: Well, I usually stuck to family ones and - um - real life, but now I'm trying to have a variety so I can try other - um -

read other books and see what they're like.

Nancy

Nancy was a shy, quiet eleven-year-old girl who was considered by her teacher to be average in her language arts ability. Her mother felt that she had previously had some difficulty with comprehension. She told me that,

> "[Now] She reads nightly and she reads to herself. And before it was a struggle to get her to read. I found I had to read with her because she would just skip over the words and she would never retain what she had read. She just, um, read and then didn't really think about it. She wouldn't know where she was in the book the next night or anything that she had read before."

Nancy's mother had read to her or discussed books with her at home on a regular basis up to the end of grade five. Her parents did not read regularly themselves, but did encourage all of their children to read.

> Mrs. N: I did [talk to her about her books] in the past though. Not in grade six, but the first five grades. It was always a struggle.

Nancy had access to several magazines at home and kept a collection of comic books under her bed. Most of the novels she read came from the school collection.

Nancy had noticed a change in her reading habits over the last year. "This - this program makes me want to read more books that I haven't read before, because before I (lowers voice) barely ever read any books (laughs). Well, I couldn't find any books in the library."

I noticed that Nancy would start to read immediately during reading periods and would also read frequently during her free time. She was often easily distracted from her book, but these interruptions would last only for a brief period. She usually kept both her individual novel study book and her group novel study book on her desk, her page designated with a bookmark.

Robby

Robby was a well-behaved, conscientious eleven-year-old boy. His teacher felt that he was about average in his language arts ability, and she had noticed an improvement during the year in how much he enjoyed reading. His mother had also noticed an improvement during the year.

Mrs. M: From what he's done since the beginning of the year, he's drastically improved, especially in his reading. ... Well, he wouldn't read anything at the beginning of the year. Comics was just about it. Now he's really proud of his accomplishments and reads me lists of what he's read.

At home, Robby had a large collection of books, and his parents bought books for him frequently, but he did not often read at home. His mother said, "I still have to push him a bit to get him to read at home, but he's reading such a lot in school right now that I'm not going to push too hard for fear that I'll push him over the edge.". Robby also spoke about reading at home.

R: Earlier in the year and last year, they [his parents] made me read at home - a book from home, and I'd have to read at least half an hour to an hour a night.

I: Do you still read at night?

R: No, because my mom knows that Ms. Samuels makes me read a lot.

Robbie's parents did not read regularly at home and Robbie's mother mentioned several times that she had not given Robbie much support in his reading.

Robby preferred writing to reading. When asked if he liked reading, he responded,

> Yeah, I guess, sometimes. It's the adventure and suspense and stuff like that. ...Well, you get to see what people go through sometimes, see funny things and - you get to (long pause) you get to learn about the book or something like that.

His mother said,

> I think he - he likes books, but I think he's surprised when he gets into a book, that it's good. You know? I think because he hasn't - he wasn't a reader before this year, you know, I think they were all boring after the first page.

I noticed that Robby always completed his reading assignments on time. When I first joined the classroom, I frequently observed Robby reading, but towards June, Robby read less and less often, and when he did read, he more and more commonly chose comic books.

David

David was a moderately overweight eleven-year-old boy who often had difficulty getting along with his classmates. David had problems staying on task and was frequently seen wandering around the classroom. His teacher considered him a low average student.

From the beginning of my visits to the class, David showed a great deal of interest in talking to me, either about my study or about his work. He would occasionally work on his reading or writing close to where I was sitting, apparently appreciating the companionship.

David was not one of my original selections as a key informant since his parents were not willing to be interviewed, however, he was so anxious to be interviewed that I decided to include him.

David liked reading and told me that he would often read when he got home from school and then wouldn't go out to play.

> "Cause lots of times when I don't have anyone to play with, I'll sit down and read a book, and then when I'm reading someone calls to play with me and I don't want to play with them cause I'm into my book. (laughs)"

However, at school, he was often frustrated during novel studies and claimed to prefer whichever type of novel study he was not working on.

Daryl

Daryl was a twelve-year-old boy who moved into the class about one month from the beginning of my observations there. This move was apparently the second move for him that year, and at the end of June, the family moved again. Daryl told me, "I sort of feel upset when I move because I always lose all my friends and have to make new ones." Daryl's parents were unwilling to be interviewed.

Daryl had a difficult time settling in, often causing disruptions while Ms. Samuels was conferencing with another student and during group work. He told me that he felt out of place and rather incompetent in this class.

I: Umhmm. (pause) Do you like doing that (writing)?

Dr: No.

I: You don't like doing that. How come?

Dr: 'Cause I'm no good.

I: You're no good at it? 'Cause you're out of practice?

Dr: Well, I'm just new at it, and I'm not very good. I'm not too fond of it.

Daryl didn't like reading. He was the only student in the class who was frequently observed pretending to read. He would hold his book in front of his face, quickly scan the page, and then turn to the next page. This behavior was sometimes accompanied by furtive looks to see if the teacher was watching. Daryl was also seen holding a book upsidedown, making frequent checks to see if anyone was watching him. During my stay, I rarely saw Daryl involved in a book. One exception was with Dear Mr. Henshaw which he started as a group novel study at the beginning of June. Although he rarely completed his reading and assignments in time to work with the group, Daryl did become relatively involved in the novel on several occasions. He would read for periods of fifteen or twenty minutes without interruption and would ignore most distractions.

SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the key characteristics of the language arts program that was observed. The teacher was keenly interested in children's books and shared her interest with the students, books were

readily available, books were talked about constantly in both informal and formal discussions, students' work was valued and the students had a set time to read.

The students in this class were of varying abilities and backgrounds and the key informants reflect this variety. Four of the key informants had been in the program since September, one had been in the program or one similar to it for two years, and one joined the program while the study was in progress.

The parents interviewed were all fairly positive about the program and their children's progress during the year.

CHAPTER V

Attitudes Toward Reading

> Teaching someone to read is imparting a skill, while encouraging and stimulating the pleasure of reading and teaching the importance of reading impart a value. We are teaching the skill, but are we teaching the value? (Levine, 1984, p. 1)

Children's attitudes toward reading can be assessed using many different instruments. Some of the instruments suggested by Levine and Singleton (1981) and used in this study are: interviews with students, students logs, observation, interviews with teachers, frequency counts of books read or checked out of library, behavioral observation of facial expressions, body posture, and nonverbal behaviors. Through using all these instruments, an attempt has been made to arrive at a holistic picture of the child and his/her attitude toward reading.

NUMBER OF BOOKS READ

It seems that the number of books read by children is an indicator of their attitude toward reading. Those children who actively engage in reading probably have a positive attitude toward reading, and those

children who engage in reading only when forced can be assumed to have a negative attitude.

All the children in the study were required to complete two novel studies in the first part of the year and at least three novel studies between Christmas holidays and June. In addition, they were expected to complete at least one or two individual novel studies.

In this class certain behaviors seemed to be consistently engaged in by many members of the class. Throughout the day, most students would have one or more novels, each marked with a bookmark, sitting on their desks. At one point, one student had nine books sitting on his desk. I asked him about the books and he claimed to be reading all of them. When I questioned him further, he explained that four of them were his 'fantasy books' and he only read a part of them at a time. He was reading each of the others. One was his novel for group studies, one was for individual studies, one was his library book which he was just starting, one was Secret of Nimh (he had indicated to Ms. Samuels that he was not enjoying it at present), and one was Fellowship of the Ring. He was in a boring spot in this book right now but was anxious to reach the part about the bridge which Jerry had told him about.

Most of the students had kept lists of books read during the year. I received copies of lists of books read throughout the year from fifteen of the twenty students participating in the study. The numbers of books read by these students ranged from three, read by Daryl who had joined the class on April 4, to 94 read by a girl who was considered one of the top students by Ms. Samuels. These students read a total of 467 books, averaging 31 novels each. The median was 34 books read, and thirteen of the fifteen students had read fifteen novels or more.

With the exception of Daryl, the student who had read the least number of books during the year was Ken. Ken was a student who was experiencing great difficulty with language arts. The previous year, he had been enrolled in a special class to help him in this area of study. Ken had read seven books during the year including Anne of Green Gables which he was reading on the day I first joined the class. When he was asked to comment on one of the books he had read during the year, he wrote the following statement.

> I like Bookes that make you feel thes is hapen rite in front of your faes like in ann of green gabales it semed as if you were wofing it in front of you and the cerater semed as reall pepal to

day. the Book was grate. I like the way the auther rote it. It realy semd reale.

Despite Ken's difficulties in language arts, he was able to read and understand the group novels and make valuable contributions to group discussions.

Jerry

Jerry usually read more than one book during the same time period. At one time, he was reading five. Sometimes during the fifteen minute silent reading period in the morning, he would shift from one book to another part way through. When I began my interview with Jerry's mother, he was sitting on the couch in the next room reading The Blue Sword. Part way through the interview, I noticed that he changed to reading Return of the King. When I asked him how he could switch from one book to another like that he replied that he was in a boring spot in The Blue Sword and thought that he needed a break so he switched books. He said that Return of the King was also in a slow-moving spot.

Jerry did not keep track of the books that he read during the year even though Ms. Samuels had asked the class to do so at the beginning of the year. When asked how many books he had read during the year, Jerry said that he thought he had read eighty to eighty-five,

but he wasn't sure. During my stay, I saw Jerry reading or heard him talking about nineteen different novels, including advanced novels like J.R.R. Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring and Robin McKinley's The Hero and the Crown. In addition to these he had, during the year, completed novel studies on five other books, and when asked to complete a list of books he had read, he indicated the titles of thirteen other novels. In addition to reading novels, he indicated that he had read some nonfiction and 127 comics out of his collection of 630 "Archie" comics.

Jerry felt that he had a poor collection of novels. "I just like reading books over and over again cause I don't have very many books. I have lots of comic books, but I don't have very many reading books." However his mother disagreed.

I: Is his collection large?

Mrs. W: Jerry's? Oh yeah, you know, he's, uh, he buys a lot of books for himself and again, they're all the, uh, um children's books that you find, the uh, let me see, the different adventure books that are becoming a series now?

I: Dungeons and Dragons?

Mrs. W: Dungeons and Dragons, not really Dungeons and Dragons. What are those, Jerry? Choose your own Adventures?

J: Fighting Fantasies.

Mrs. W: Fighting Fantasies and

J: I don't read those anymore because I've got all of them and they're boring.

I: And they're what? Oh, they're boring.

J: They're boring now because I've finished them.

Rhonda

Rhonda read a great deal, both at home and at school. Her father called her "a compulsive bookworm" and her mother indicated that she always had liked to read. Rhonda, however, felt that her interest in reading had grown during the past two years when she had been in classes where novel studies were used in the language arts program.

I: Do you read more this year than you did say last year or the year before?

R: Yeah. In grade 5, I really started to read a lot because in grade 4 I didn't like reading at all and then I had a different teacher and a different program and stuff and then when we

had novel studies I started to enjoy books a lot.

Rhonda and her parents had all noticed a change in the type of reading Rhonda had engaged in during the year.

R: I - I really used to like realistic ones and stuff, but now I'm starting to like science fiction a lot more, cause it makes you think and it has all these different things that you never think of and it's pretty neat. I like lots of the Monica Hughes stories - science fiction - she writes a lot of science fiction. I like mostly all books though.

Rhonda had 49 books written on her list of books read during the year, ranging from books like Anastasia Morningstar, A Place for Margaret, and Here She is, Ms. Teeny Wonderful read during the first half of the year to Watcher in the Woods, The Tomorrow City, and The Wise One read in April, May and June. The books listed were at varying levels of difficulty and included many genres.

Rhonda indicated to me that she did not like to read more than one book at a time.

I: Do you have trouble when you read more than one book? Keeping track of which one is which?

R: Well, I usually read one and then read the other. Like I read one book and finish it and then read the other.

I: So you don't like reading more than one at a time.

R: No, not really, no more than two anyways.

Despite this statement, Rhonda read in at least two books most days that I observed the class. At one point in June, she was reading four novels, and reading excerpts of other books to decide which to read next.

Rhonda did not have a large collection of books at home. Her parents felt that the school library and public library had adequate collections. Rhonda apparently went to the public library every two weeks, but she usually depended more upon the books in the classroom for reading material.

Rhonda did not like reading comic books. She said they were, "not really much of a story. Just talking and stuff." Her parents indicated that there were no comic books in the home and their family rarely bothered to read the comics in the Saturday newspaper.

Nancy

Nancy's mother had noticed a change in Nancy's reading behavior during the year.

Mrs. N: She reads nightly and she reads to herself and before it was a struggle to get her to read. I found I had to read with her because she would just skip over the words and she would never retain what she had read (pause). She just - um - read and then didn't really think about it. She wouldn't know where she was in the book the next night or anything that she had read before.

I: So she didn't really remember anything. It was only reading for the sake of getting through reading?

Mrs. N: Reading because I told her she should read and (pause) Like - she wasn't getting the encouragement to read before. Like I tried to encourage her but she wasn't being encouraged from the school. Now, well I don't even know how she reads. She reads because she wants to read or because she has to read for something that's coming up in school the next day. But there's no struggle about it. She does it and that's it.

Nancy, like most other students in the class, would read two or three books during the same time period. I asked Nancy if reading more than one book at a time ever confused her.

N: I don't [have trouble]....Cause sometimes you start reading one book and then you remember about the other book but it doesn't fit in.

Nancy had 34 novels on her list of books read during the year. This list did not include six of the novels that I had observed her reading and had discussed with her. The novels were mostly easy reading, for example, Charlotte's Web, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing etc.. She did, however, start to read more difficult books towards the end of the year; novels like, Building Blocks, Summer of the Swans, and The Tomorrow City.

Nancy also enjoyed reading comics, particularly "Mickey Mouse" and "Donald Duck". She kept a collection of these under her bed so that if she ran out of reading material she didn't have to get out of bed and let the bed get cold. Instead, she could just bend over and pick them up.

Robby

Both Ms. Samuels and Robby's mother had noticed a great improvement in the amount of reading Robby did during the year and his apparent enjoyment of his reading. Robby's mother was pleased with the change.

Mrs. M: From what he's done since the beginning of the year, he's drastically improved especially in his reading.

I: Umhmm. In what way?

Mrs. M: Well, he wouldn't read anything at the beginning of the year. Comics was just about it and now he's really proud of his accomplishments and reads me lists of what he's read.

I: Oh, that's nice.

Mrs. M: And he says "43 books now, Mom" That sort of thing. He's really pleased with himself. And he's getting a lot more enjoyment also out of it.

Robby did not like reading more than one book at a time. He said he "didn't have time for it." He also felt that sometimes he became confused. I noticed that when Robby was reading more than one book, he often put off reading the second book, for example, he would take

his second book to the story corner to read, but he would end up reading comic books.

Robby was very proud of the number of books he had read during the year. When asked about this, he always answered with an exact number; in June it was 27. When I looked at his list of books read, however, I found that it included three books that Ms. Samuels had read to the class and that Robby had not read, three books that Robby did not complete, and two short stories. Two books, one of them a collection of short stories, that I knew Robby had read were not on his list.

Robby frequently read comic books. He would go to the story corner carrying the book that he intended to read, but once he was there, he would sometimes try to read for a few minutes and then take a comic book from the shelf. Robby also indicated that he often read comic books at home.

David

David also usually read between one and three books during the same time period. He indicated that this usually didn't confuse him although he remembered one time that in talking about a book he "got all mixed up about which characters were in which one."

David had 36 books on his list of the books he had read during the year. This list did not include the Dungeons and Dragons series books or the "Archie" comics, "the big thick ones," that he collected and read frequently at home. He said that these were "not really kinda good books." The list also did not include several books that I saw David reading in the classroom. One of his favorite authors was Gordon Korman. David told me several times that he had read every Gordon Korman novel except the new one, and some of the others he had read more than once.

David did not make use of the public library, but he said he had a large collection of comics and books at home.

Daryl

Daryl had not done a great deal of reading before he joined the class in April. He frequently mentioned reading the books Old Yellar, It's Me, Christie, and Gang Wars. He told me he had read Old Yellar three times and had seen the movie quite a few times as well. Although he usually indicated that he had read It's Me, Christie himself, on one occasion, he told me that his previous teacher had read it to him. Daryl had read Gang Wars at home.

I: Do you read at home?

Dr: Yeah - sometimes. I read at home. I liked it so much - like Gang Wars - I liked it so much I couldn't put it down.

I: Umhmm. When was that?

Dr: Before I moved here.

I: Have you read any good books recently that were so good you can't put them down?

Dr: No.

I: No?

Dr: It's really the only book I really ever did like.

The first book Daryl agreed to read after he joined the class was Old Yellar which he read as a group novel study. He often had trouble concentrating on reading the book in class, sometimes sitting looking at the open book for five minutes without turning a page. He did eventually complete the novel and his chapter summaries, however. During his three months in class, Daryl also read King of the Grizzlies, Mary of Mile 18, and Dear Mr. Henshaw. He started a novel called Kept in the Dark, but never completed it. He claimed to have read It's Me, Christie again as well, but I never saw him reading it in class, and his

summary of the book sounds very similar to the summary on the cover of the book.

Daryl also did not enjoy reading comics. He felt that they were "just boring."

Summary

Most of the students in this class read more than the required novels; some students reading over thirty books during the year. The difficulty of the books read depended on the students, with some students consistently choosing to read novels that were well within the range of their reading ability and other students choosing to read more challenging novels.

Of the six students interviewed, four of them, two above average students, one average student, and one below average student, regularly read more than one book at a time; Robby, an average student found it confusing to read two books at once; and Daryl, who joined the class in April, preferred not to read at all.

Four of the six students enjoyed reading comics and had large collections of comics at home. Rhonda, one of the top students, felt that comics didn't really tell a story; and Daryl felt that comics were boring.

CHOOSING A BOOK TO READ

It is probable that some of the frustrations children experience while reading novels are a result of poor choices of reading content or difficulty. If poor choices are made too often, it is likely that children will gradually develop a poor attitude toward reading.

Most of the children in the class usually chose to read books that were displayed in the classroom since there were many books of various genres readily available there. Some of the children also signed books out of the school library and the nearby public library.

In the library, advice and help from teacher, librarian, and other students was often sought. Students also made frequent use of the card catalog looking under categories such as fantasy and adventure. Students checked on the shelves under particular authors or just browsed the shelves looking for titles that might catch their eye.

Once an initial selection was made, most students would check the write-up on the back cover or the overleaf of the book. They also frequently spoke to their teacher and/or other students about the book they

were thinking about reading sometimes making decisions in concurrence with the advice given and other times not heeding this advice. Students would frequently pick up a book and leaf through a few pages or would sometimes take several books back to their desks for further contemplation.

Jerry

Jerry made frequent use of the school library and the public library as well as the class collection. He often brought books from the public library to read in class and show to his teacher and friends. His mother was somewhat concerned that by the end of the year, Jerry had nearly outgrown the local library.

I: Do you have any concerns about Jerry's reading ability?

Mrs. W: (pause) Uh, not really. Uh, I don't think he'll ever run out of things to read. That would be my only concern. (laughs) Well, you know, the local library, yeah, the local library is kind of hard to keep - he's read a lot of those books through the years, you know. And even from the public library, like in the city, you know, we don't go there on a regular

basis, but after a certain period of time, well the local library, he's pretty well read everything he's wanted to read there, and I think that we'll go into the city to get more.

I: You said that you go to the local library regularly. How often do you go?

Mrs. W: Oh, at least once a week.

Jerry: The local library, it's not as -

Mrs. W: Well, it tries to cover everything, you see.

Jerry: They don't have many good books.

In the school library, Jerry would either browse the shelf with a friend, go directly to where a particular author was, or refer to the card catalog.

Logbook, April 23: Craig and Jerry are at shelves before they are dismissed to look for books. Jerry has card catalog drawer in hand, his finger marking a spot. He takes a book, flips through it, holds it up to show Chris. Chris says, "Oh no, I already read that."

Jerry; "Is it good?"

Chris; "Well, no, not really."

Jerry continues to look at book, then puts it back. He takes card catalog to another area of the shelf. Takes book off shelf and over to

librarian's table. Jerry wanders around with card catalog drawer and book in hand for some time and then goes and signs out book.

In choosing a book, Jerry generally read its cover thoroughly. One day, he brought a novel he had signed out from the local library up to Ms. Samuels to show her the comment written on the back. He was quite excited because someone had written that that author was the greatest fantasy writer since J.R.R. Tolkien and Anne McCaffrey. Ms. Samuels was skeptical, and Jerry later abandoned the book when he was about half way through.

Jerry often relied on his friends and teacher to help him choose a book.

J: Well - uh - well I choose one - choose some that my friends really like, and I see if I like them and I read then. Sometimes they come out boring and - or really dumb, but - And (pause) well my dad likes mystery books and before he said that I should read - um - a James Bond, those big huge funny books (laughs). But I couldn't because they're just too big. And the printing was too small and I -

I: Lord of the Rings is as big as some of them.

J: I know but it's - I like Lord of the Rings but I don't really like mystery novels. I like fantasy better.

Jerry spoke about the influence of his friends on another occasion as well.

J: Well, sometimes I might get a book that I think is really, really neat, and I start reading it and then my friend or somebody says that this book really isn't very good, and it sort of gets me discouraged of reading it. Like sometimes, I just don't want to read it.

Most of the books Jerry chose for himself were fantasy novels. For group novel studies, Ms. Samuels often chose humor and real life books. Jerry enjoyed these books as well and seemed to think that whatever book he was currently reading was "almost better than Lord of the Rings."

Rhonda

Rhonda repeatedly depended upon advice from her teacher and friends in choosing a book to read. There was only one novel that I saw her choose without assistance, and it was the only book that I saw her abandon and not finish. After seeking advice from her friends and teacher, Rhonda would generally sit down

with two or three books and examine each of them more thoroughly. She would read the back of the book, the chapter titles, and would scan through parts of the novel. Occasionally she would read the first chapter or two of the books before making a final decision. When she did make her decision, it was often a matter of which book to read first rather than which book to read.

Rhonda would sometimes read books that Ms. Samuels was reading to the class. She started reading The Hobbit when Ms. Samuels was nearly finished it.

I: How about reading the same book that Ms. Samuels has read to you?

R: Yeah, I'm reading it right now. I went back a ways cause parts of it I didn't understand, parts of it I missed and stuff and so I'm reading back from the part when - I just finished when the - the - um - the eagles had carried the dwarves and Gandalf and the hobbit to - um - off in another land. Like away from the mountains. And - um - that's where I left off.

I: Do you find it easier to understand when you're reading it or when she's reading it?

R: Well - um - I guess when I'm reading it because I can go back and I can read as slow as I want.

Toward the end of April, Rhonda started to 'collect' books. She was reading four novels at the time, but she would go to the book collection and read parts of books that friends had told her about. She told me that she was trying to decide what to read next.

Nancy

Nancy depended upon her friends and Ms. Samuels to help her choose books to read. When she just browsed the shelves in the library, she often left without signing out a book.

Logbook, May 16: [Library] Nancy browses shelf. She pulls books off shelf, looks at cover, puts them back. She takes one, examines front cover and puts it back. Nancy waits to speak with Ms. Samuels. She leaves without signing out a book.

In talking about choosing books from the library, Nancy gave further evidence of her uncertainty.

N: I don't know. Sometimes I look for - um - Beverly Cleary books cause they're - I like her books and I like mystery books and I think

there's some over there (points to fiction area), I'm not sure. And there are a few books over there (points to shelf), I just somehow find them. And Gordon Korman books are over there.

I: What would make you pick a book off the shelf?

N: I don't know. I think it's the cover sometimes. I know you're not supposed to judge a book like that, but I do sometimes.

Nancy often sought the assistance of Ms. Samuels and her friends in selecting a novel to read.

Logbook, April 15: Nancy and Ms. Samuels talk at the book table about what book to read. Nancy takes two back to her desk, reads the back of them. Nancy looks at front covers of the books. She asks Denise something about The Tomorrow City, flips through it and then takes the other book back. She flips through The Tomorrow City again, then turns to the first page and starts to read.

Nancy liked to read novels that other people had told her about. "If when people tell me about it, then I think they're good? Then I read."

Robby

Robby experienced great difficulty in choosing a novel to read. In the library, he often spent an

extensive amount of time browsing the shelf and usually left with a book that was unsuitable, either because of reading level or interest level.

Robby knew that he had difficulty choosing a book and it was one of the things he didn't like about reading.

I: How do you feel about the material you're reading? How do you feel about reading novels?

Rb: Fun. Cause that way you don't have to go to the library all the time and choose a - cause then I don't have to look around for a book.

Robby had trouble judging the length and reading level of a novel. On one occasion Robby decided to read an anthology of short stories which Ms. Samuels had been reading to the class. The stories were folk tales written at about a grade three level. He seemed to enjoy reading these, becoming quickly engrossed in the book during sustained silent reading and library periods. On other occasions, he tried to read books like The Blue Sword and Fellowship of the Ring and had to abandon them because they were too difficult. Once I observed him trying to choose among three novels recommended by Ms. Samuels.

Logbook, June 11: Group novel studies. Robby is the only one in his group who is finished. Ms. Samuels helps Robby find a book for individual studies. David goes to talk to Robby who is trying to decide which book to read. Robby looks on the back of the books he has on his desk. He is debating between The Great Escape by Paul Brickhill, The Book of Three, and The Kestral by Lloyd Alexander. He looks at the table of contents in The Great Escape and says, "This book isn't very long." When he turns the page and sees that there is another page of contents, he changes his mind [and indicates that the book is too long to read].

Robby often decided whether or not to read a novel on the basis of how interesting the first two pages were.

I: Do you have trouble finding a book?

Rb: Yeah. I look for a book and it's gone. I just - I can't think of any other book I want and then I choose a book that looks good and I read the first two pages - like after I sign it out - and it's pretty stupid.

Robby started books and later abandoned them, sometimes when he was about half way through the book, but more often before he completed the first chapter.

David

David generally chose to read novels that were displayed around the room, novels that he had heard about, or novels written by Gordon Korman. On several occasions, I observed him pick up a book that was standing on the back shelf of the room and take it to his desk and start to read it. When he spoke to me about how reading influenced his writing, he mentioned a "little short book that I found one night on a table.... It only took me about ten minutes to read." On other occasions, David would take nonfiction books off the display table to read during the silent reading period.

David also read books that he had heard about. For the first part of my study, the students were participating in the Alberta Book Awards program, and were encouraged to read these books, since after they had read ten books, they were allowed to vote for the one they thought was best. At this time, David usually chose books from this program to read. Afterwards, Ms. Samuels was reading The Hobbit, and David started to

read it on his own, but did not finish it. On another occasion, the librarian spoke to the students about the novel, Kavik, the Wolf Dog. David approached her for the book as soon as she finished speaking.

When browsing the shelves in the library, David would always check for books written by Gordon Korman and for books in the Dungeons and Dragons series. Usually, he was unsuccessful in this search and would leave the library without a book.

Daryl

Daryl would often pick up books that were displayed around the room and glance through them. He would generally read the back of the book and then look for pictures. He did not often take these books back to his desk to peruse them further.

When Daryl was looking for a book to read, he tended to choose books that he had previously read or books that he had been told about. Otherwise, he would use the information on the back of the book and/or the pictures to base his decision on.

In the library, Daryl would have a cursory look at the fiction shelves and then he would generally choose a magazine or a primary story book to look at while he conversed with his friends.

Summary

The six key informants in this study all had difficulty choosing a book by browsing the library shelves. When they did sign out a novel that they found in this way, they usually abandoned the book part way through.

The influence of friends in choosing a book was quite apparent. Jerry only started reading fantasy novels after talking about them with Chris. Rhonda frequently checked with a friend before making a decision about which book to read. Nancy also liked to read books that her friends had told her about. The teacher was also a strong influence on book choices. David, Robby, and Rhonda were all seen reading books that the teacher had read excerpts from. The other three students were also observed checking with Ms. Samuels about what book to read.

Five of the students interviewed relied heavily on the classroom selection of books for their reading material. Jerry had moved beyond the book selection offered in the class and depended heavily on the public library and book stores.

TIMES CHILDREN READ

Children's attitudes toward reading may be reflected in the use they make of the time allotted for reading. Such behaviors as the speed with which the child settles down to reading, the amount of attention paid to the novel, and the use of free time for reading may be indicators of the child's attitude.

The students were offered a number of periods of time during the day in which they could read. The first ten to fifteen minutes of every day was set aside for silent reading. Although this was generally a quiet time, some students frequently did not use this time to read. Some students occasionally wrote, others sometimes sat in pairs and flipped through magazines or nonfiction books available in the classroom, while a few students would daydream or fiddle with something at their desks.

Students were also encouraged to read during individual novel study period or after completing group discussions during group novel study period. These times were spent reading by most students who seemed anxious to complete their assignments. Students could also read after completing work in other subjects or during a half hour free period on Friday afternoons.

The use of these times for reading varied from student to student and sometimes seemed to depend on the novel the student was reading at a particular time.

Jerry

Jerry generally did not use the silent reading time in the morning for reading, but preferred to spend it writing instead. It was this behavior that prompted Ms. Samuels to indicate that she felt that Jerry had "gone down" in his enjoyment of books. I asked Jerry about this.

I: What about reading in the morning? The first fifteen minutes?

J: I write usually. (laughs)

I: Yeah, why?

J: That's usually a quiet time. And then I can get settled down and do my work. But then if I read and then it's writing time, I'm not - I just want to - well, you know - fool around. Well, not fool around, but just do something else. I just don't want to write.

It seemed that Jerry had difficulty settling down to writing during the time period following silent reading because it tended to be somewhat noisier. However, if he started writing during the quieter time, he became

involved enough in his work that he could continue working even though there were more distractions.

When asked when he did like to read, Jerry replied:

J: Usually in the afternoon and the evening. Cause then I'm relaxed and I want to read. Some - in the morning, sometimes before - before I go to school - um - I read. That's if I'm in a normal mood. I didn't read today because I'm in a hyper mood today.

Jerry's mother agreed with this stating that "He (Jerry) will always read before he goes to bed or sometimes when he comes home." I interviewed Jerry's mother from 7:30 to 8:30 in the evening. When I arrived, Jerry and his younger brother were in the living room. Jerry's brother was watching television, but Jerry was sitting on the couch, his back to the television, reading a book. He read most of the time that I was there, stopping once to switch books.

At school, it was unusual to see Jerry reading for more than five minutes at once. Jerry also felt that he did not often find time to read at school.

I: What about at school?

J: Sometimes. Other times - um - well I don't really get much time to read. We don't really

because - On Friday, we get - there's - um - that free period. I read sometimes there, but then sometimes, somebody asks me to go do something else so I just - There was one day, I was reading The Two Towers. They were at Helmsgate. I think it was last Friday, I think. And then - and then - um - Mark wanted me to come play - uh - uh - well I can't remember what it was called. Yeah - but - um - so I just went to play and didn't read.

Rhonda

At school, Rhonda read whenever the opportunity arose. Frequently she would start to read before assembly in the morning, and upon returning to the class after assembly, she would immediately start to read again. Rhonda made good use of any class time allotted for reading, generally starting to read almost immediately and often continuing to read for a few seconds after the time period was over. She often read when she completed her work in other subjects as well.

At home, Rhonda also read on a regular basis. She and her parents agreed that she generally read for about half an hour before going to sleep. Rhonda also liked to read on Saturday mornings.

R: I like to read early in the morning in my bed (laughs) on Saturday morning when I'm lazy, and I like to read at night too. Mostly in my bed though.

Nancy

Nancy usually made good use of the sustained silent reading period. Upon returning from the general assembly, she usually proceeded directly to her desk and would begin to read almost immediately. Most of the time, she would read until a few moments after the bell rang at 9:15. On some occasions, however, she did have difficulty settling down to read. These times seemed to correlate with starting a new book or with reading a book that she was finding difficult or boring, for example, The Sea Egg.

N: It took me two weeks to read that one. It was really skinny.

I: So you struggled through. Were there a lot of words you didn't understand in it?

N: Well, it's not the words. It's kind of the content in it really. What was happening in it.

Nancy also made good use of her novel study period. As soon as her group was finished discussing the section

read, she would go to her desk and start reading promptly. She sometimes would continue reading part way through recess in order to finish the agreed upon section. Nancy told me that she didn't take her novel study books home very often since she usually had time to read them at school.

Nancy read regularly at home, usually before going to bed.

N: Well, if I'm reading and it's around 10 o'clock, my dad comes down and tells us we only have five or ten minutes and we have to go to sleep, and - but usually I read until ten.

I: And so what time do you go to bed usually?

N: Um, 8:30.

Nancy's mom also commented on Nancy reading at home.

I: So she reads most every night then?

Mrs. N: I think so - yes - not on the weekends as much. Sometimes - like this weekend she just sat out in the sun and read a book while we were windsurfing and she sat down and grabbed a book and so - (laughs). I don't know if that's progress or regress, but it's different.

Robby

Robby did not always read a novel during the silent reading period in the morning. Sometimes he preferred to write, and at other times he looked around the room, talked quietly with a friend, or read comic books. During novel study period, Robby usually read quietly sometimes continuing part way through recess, preferring to complete his reading at school rather than taking it home.

I asked Robby when he liked to read.

Rb: In the morning. I'd like to read in the afternoon cause that'd take up most of our (...) cause the afternoon's all hot. Instead of work.

I: Isn't reading work?

Rb: Well, yeah, but it's funner than math.

I: Ok. What about at home?

Rb: Well, at home I don't usually read that much. Well, I read but - sometimes I just take home my book and read some of it and -

According to both Robby and his mom, Robby did not often read at home. Only occasionally would he read before going to bed.

David

When I first started observing in the classroom, David was often unable to concentrate on his novel during the silent reading period in the morning. He would often flip through a nonfiction book or a magazine looking at the pictures or glance through another student's 'published' writing. Towards the end of the school year, however, it seemed that he more and more often would read during this time. In May, there were times that David would read steadily for ten to fifteen minutes, and he would frequently continue reading for one or two minutes after the bell rang to end the silent reading period.

David also generally would read through most of the allotted time during novel studies, sometimes despite interruptions. On several occasions, David stayed in at the beginning of recess to finish a chapter that he was reading.

I asked David when he liked to read.

D: Well, it depends, cause lots of times when I don't have anyone to play with, I'll sit down and read a book, and then when I'm reading someone calls to play with me and I don't want

to play with them cause I'm into my book. (laughs)

On another occasion, he replied:

D: Yeah, I read every night when I go to bed and my mom doesn't know about it.

I: I won't tell her.

D: My bedtime is 9:30 except she says I can read if it's a good book - like not a comic - till 10. So I just read until 12. (laughs)

David also indicated that he read the newspaper most mornings.

Daryl

I asked Daryl when he liked to read and he responded, "Oh, when I - I don't like to read. When I have to." The only time I ever saw Daryl reading at the beginning of his stay was when he was required to do so - during silent reading period or during novel study period. Often he only pretended to read during these times as well. Daryl was the only student in the class that I saw frequently pretending to read. Other students who didn't choose to read at a particular time, did not bother pretending, but would rather take something else out to work on. Daryl would frequently sit with his book open, sometimes upside down, held in

front of his face in such a way that it was difficult to observe what he was doing.

> Logbook, April 29: Daryl holds book in front of face again. His eyes move back and forth in a reading fashion but too fast to be reading.

Occasionally in June, Daryl would read for longer periods of time. One day he read Dear Mr. Henshaw for the entire silent reading period. The students went to the library immediately after silent reading that day since they had missed their library period the previous day. Daryl took Dear Mr. Henshaw with him and read for most of the half hour library period as well. A few days later, Daryl read the same novel in the story corner during silent reading despite numerous interruptions from his friends.

> Logbook, June 9: Daryl starts to read Dear Mr. Henshaw Daryl is reading this morning despite interference from Mark, Shaun, and Jerry who are discussing class pictures. When bell rings, he looks over the page he was on before closing the book and returning to his desk.

When asked if he read at home, Daryl indicated that he sometimes read before he went to bed, but that he preferred to watch television.

Summary

With the exception of Robby and Daryl, the students in this study preferred reading at home over reading at school. They found the noise and movement in the class distracting when they were trying to read. Robby and Daryl preferred to do other things at home, so even though they also were bothered by distractions at school, they tried to finish their reading assignments there.

Despite the fact that the students preferred reading at home, most of them were able to read successfully at school, sometimes during sustained silent reading and more often during novel study period. Jerry and Daryl were the only students who were rarely seen reading at school; Jerry because he found it difficult to concentrate and preferred reading at home, and Daryl because he did not like reading.

All of the key informants were observed at some time during the study reading in their free time, either for part of recess, after they were finished their work, in library class while other students were choosing a novel, during their free period on Fridays, or before classes started in the morning.

WHERE CHILDREN READ

Where students choose to read may be a reflection of their attitudes toward reading. For example, students who choose a noisy area of the room may do so because they really do not want to read or because they can concentrate on their reading despite the noise. Other children may choose a quieter area of the room so that they can concentrate more completely on their novel.

The children in this classroom were permitted to sit wherever they chose when they were reading. Many students frequently chose to read in the story corner where there were cushions to lie on. Others felt that the story corner was too noisy and would sit on the floor under a desk or table or in another quiet area of the room. Some students would remain at their desks.

Jerry

Jerry frequently chose to read in the story corner, but at times he would read in his desk. When asked about his favorite reading place, he replied, "In

the story corner, cause you have cushions and sometimes it's quiet. I like that." At home, Jerry liked to read on his bed, "cause it's comfortable" or on the couch in the living room.

Rhonda

Rhonda preferred to find a quiet, relaxing place to read. When I was observing her, she usually read at her desk, but occasionally she would sit in the story corner.

I: Where do you like to be when you're reading?

R: Somewhere quiet and where nobody can disturb me. That's - uh - sometimes in the classroom it's sort of hard to read. And - um - I don't know.

I: Ok. If you're in the classroom, where would you go?

R: Story corner probably. Lots of times I sit in my desk though because people are talking in the story corner or there's not enough room or something.

I: Ok. What about if you're at home?

R: Um - somewhere were I can relax, like in a chair or in the couch or in my bedroom. Somewhere quiet.

Nancy

At school, Nancy usually read at her desk.

N: I don't like reading in the story corner because too many people go back there and they get talking and I can't get to sleep - I mean read. [Our previous conversation had been about reading before going to sleep.]

Occasionally, Nancy would go to the carrell area to read, or would sit on the floor in a quiet area of the room.

At home, Nancy liked to read in bed or by her cat.

I: What other places do you read?

N: I read by my cat. You know there's a chair that he lies in. He sleeps in there and I sit beside him and read. It just comforts me because of his fur.

Robby

Robby rarely read at his desk. He usually would read in the story corner or would find another quieter area of the room, sometimes on the floor underneath his desk. Even when reading in the story corner, Robby would sometimes try to separate himself from other students.

Logbook, March 7: Robby takes book to story corner. He blocks himself off from the room with a chair and begins to read.

Later that morning: Robby reads on cushion on floor. He has isolated himself - on the floor behind a desk.

Being interrupted while reading was one thing that upset Robby.

Rb: When someone - like sometimes I get sort of angry when I'm reading and someone comes and bugs me when I'm in the story corner.

David

David usually looked for a quiet area where he would not be disturbed when he read. He would often sit on the floor in a small corner between the teacher's desk and the book table. Other times, he would go to one of the carrells or sit at the table I usually sat at. On the occasions that he sat in the story corner, he would usually look through a magazine or comic or talk to one of the other students instead of reading a novel.

When I asked David where he liked to read, his response was, "At home." When asked for further

clarification, he replied, "Cause at home not all the kids in the classroom are screaming and everything."

Daryl

Daryl generally hurried to the story corner whenever it was time to read. Once he was in the story corner he usually spent his time talking with his friends rather than reading. Ms. Samuels sometimes sent him back to his desk when he wasn't reading. Once he was at his desk, Daryl would sometimes read, but usually would not.

Summary

All the students in this study preferred to read somewhere comfortable and quiet. It was difficult to find this combination at school, so four of the six students preferred to read at home.

The students tried various strategies in the classroom to find a place to read. David would take a cushion to a quiet corner of the room and read there. Nancy and Rhonda generally read in their desks where they were less comfortable, but there were also less distractions. Jerry, Robby, and Daryl all preferred to read in the story corner where they were comfortable but also more frequently distracted.

HOW CHILDREN READ

Children's body language and behavior while they are reading can give clues to their attitudes toward reading. The child who is restless and frequently looks around the room while reading is probably not very interested in the story. On the other hand, the child who is not easily distracted probably is enjoying the novel. Although this behavior may change from novel to novel and also from section to section within one novel, it is likely that the child who more often becomes involved in his book is the child who has a better attitude toward reading.

Jerry

Jerry's reading behavior changed slightly depending on whether he was reading a story he wrote or a novel. In my notes on March 21, I described Jerry rereading a story that he had written:

> Jerry takes his story to the story center. He reads through his story, mouthing the words as he reads, occasionally making changes. Jerry seems very involved in the story. He hasn't been distracted when students gathered around the anole tank which is sitting right beside him or when various upsets have happened around the room.

On May 23, I described Jerry as he was reading Fellowship of the Rings.

> Jerry starts to read Fellowship of the Rings. David calls him several times, but Jerry continues reading. He reads quite quickly - moves neither head nor lips, sitting in desk, holds book against his chest. He reads up to page 378. (He started on page 363.)

When Jerry read his own work over, he read slowly, mouthing the words, checking carefully to make sure the work was correct. When he read a novel, he read quickly, not moving his lips. During a novel study, one student commented on the speed of Jerry's reading.

> Ken: You - You read like greased lightning. In ten minutes you've finished the three chapters.
>
> J: Ohhh right.
>
> Ken: You always do that. And then you give it (the book) to me to read and it takes me two days to do it.

Jerry's mother also noticed that Jerry was reading quite quickly noting that, "He goes through a book in a couple of days, and then he's ready to read something else." When I asked Jerry about the speed of his reading, he replied that sometimes when he read slowly,

he didn't remember what was happening so he would read faster.

Jerry often had difficulty concentrating on his reading in the classroom. He frequently would start to read only to be interrupted by a friend or by a disturbance in the class. He would often stop to listen in on Ms. Samuels conferencing with a student or reading to a small group of children.

Rhonda

Once Rhonda started reading she was only infrequently disturbed by things happening in the class. Sometimes she would pause to look around the room when she finished a chapter. Other times when she was having difficulty understanding a book as with The Sea Egg she would be more easily distracted.

Nancy

Nancy usually started reading as soon as reading period started and would concentrate on her novel throughout the allotted reading time. She did have difficulty concentrating on reading, however, whenever she started a new book.

> Logbook, April 1: [First day back after spring break. Nancy is starting a new book, Building Blocks] Nancy stares into space and then talks

with group. Nancy sits with book open but looks in desk and talks to Denise. The door has been making noise. Nancy gets up to fix it. She returns to her desk and starts to read. Nancy talks to Denise again.

Robby

Robby seemed to have difficulty settling down with a book. He often spent a few minutes positioning himself and another few minutes flipping through the book and looking around the room before he started reading. Once he started reading, however, he would ignore distractions and sometimes continued reading after the allotted time was over.

Logbook, April 1: Robby goes to story corner and begins to read. Jeff goes over, pulls book away from Robby to look at it, talks to him for a moment. Robby moves away and begins to read again. Robby is several times distracted by Jeff. Each time he answers then goes back to reading. Robby puts book away when Ms. Samuels calls for attention.

Later that morning: Robby starts to read. Jerry pillow fights with Mark who throws pillow on

Robby. He leans on the pillow and continues reading.

Daryl

Daryl had a difficult time concentrating on his reading.

> Logbook, April 8: Daryl sits quietly, book closed on desk, staring around the room. Finally he picks the book up, opens it and begins to read. Daryl sits with book open and looks around the room. He starts to look at book again. Reads one page, stares around room. Daryl picks up his book again, turns to a picture and looks at it.

On those occasions when he was able to read for a short period, Daryl was still quite restless.

> Logbook, May 28: Daryl is sent to his desk during SSR [silent reading] because he is disturbing other children. Daryl is now reading at his desk. He moves around in his desk as he reads. He moves his book from his desk to right in front of his face and then back to his desk. He moves his head back and forth as he reads, and mouths the words.

Summary

The six key informants in this study all had difficulty concentrating on their novels at various

times. Sometimes they had more problems concentrating on a book when they were just starting it or when they were at a slow-moving point in the story. At these times, they seemed to be distracted by almost any occurrence in the classroom. At other times, they would become quite engrossed in the novel and would not seem to notice what was going on around them.

It seemed that the four boys were more easily distracted than the two girls. All the boys at times chose to read in the story corner where students often talked or fooled around when they were supposed to be reading. Furthermore, each of these boys were frequently the cause of the disturbances.

ANXIETY AND READING

Students become anxious and upset while reading for various reasons. By examining these reasons, we can arrive at a better understanding of children's attitudes toward reading.

The key informants in this study were all asked about being anxious or upset when reading. When first asked this, no further explanation of when they might feel anxious or upset was given by the interviewer although on further probing examples were sometimes offered.

Jerry

When asked this question, Jerry could readily offer several examples of what made him anxious or upset when he was reading.

I: Do you ever feel upset or anxious when you're reading?

J: Yeah. Cause (pause) Yeah I do. Sometimes when I'm reading a book, I just want to skip ahead a couple of chapters to a real interesting part, if I know of an interesting part, and just read that....I felt anxious when I was almost at the last part of The Two Towers because I wanted to see if Frodo was really dead or not and I just read real fast and - but it was a relief when they said that he wasn't dead. He was just knocked out.

I: Yeah.

J: And that's when I feel anxious. I feel upset - I feel anxious when - um - when a real exciting part of the book - I get to a real exciting part of the book and then like I have to stop reading for some reason and it's sort of like suspense and then I can hardly wait to get back and start reading again.

I: Ok. How about getting upset about - um - having trouble reading? Or do you have trouble reading?

J: I don't really. Sometimes I don't understand it. Like when I first started reading Lord of the Rings. I didn't - I didn't quite get what was happening until I read a couple of chapters.

Rhonda

Rhonda sometimes had difficulty understanding the novels she chose to read, particularly toward the end of the year when she was intentionally choosing types of books that were unfamiliar to her.

R: The most problems I have is understanding the plot cause I can understand most of it but sometimes I'm so - I'm concentrating so much on it that I'm not letting my mind open up and thinking about the plot and stuff.

I: Umhmm. So what do you do?

R: Well I usually just talk about it over again and say what's happened and then I write down what's happened in steps and stuff.

I: So it's important to talk to someone about it?

R: Yes

I: Does it have to be someone who knows the book?

R: Well, lots of times I just talk to myself and other times I talk with Ms. Samuels, so probably, yeah.

When Rhonda was reading Watcher in the Woods, she couldn't understand certain events.

R: But sometimes I don't quite understand the book cause I find it too hard and stuff so Ms. Samuels will read it and then we'll have a discussion on it. I'll tell her what I thought about it and then she'll say what she thought about it.

I: Does that help?

R: Yeah, cause there was this one book. It was too difficult for me to understand and she read it and explained it to me. Then I st - I sorta - like all the strings sort of - I don't know. It made more sense. All that stuff that I thought she never saw the problems, but she did. The author.

Rather than getting frustrated with the type of novel, Rhonda asked Ms. Samuels to suggest another book of the same type so that she could improve her understanding of fantasy and science fiction. Ms. Samuels suggested The Tomorrow City. Rhonda had some difficulty with

this novel and decided partway through to reread a large portion. After this she understood the book and indicated later on that she had enjoyed it.

Despite Rhonda's difficulties with reading, it was not this that made her anxious or upset while reading.

I: Do you ever feel anxious or upset while you're reading?

R: Yeah. I felt upset when - um - I forget what it was called. I read it for group novel studies and it was about this girl that got - um - a brooch for her mom. She saved money to get it. And I didn't like it when - she didn't give it to her mom by herself. The - uh - newspaper bought it for her. And I think - well - if it was me, I was imagining that the girl was me, and I thought, "Well, if that's me, I would want to do everything on my own." I don't know why. I'm just like that.

(Next interview)

I: Is there any other time you get upset or anxious when you're reading?

R: Well, I get anxious, but well, sometimes I get upset, when - um - something happens, something happens to a character. Like if he gets hurt or something, then I get upset, or

if something doesn't turn out the way I want it to. (laughs)

I: What do you get anxious about?

R: Um- if it's a mystery or something, I want to find out - um - who killed someone or whatever...

Nancy

Nancy felt anxious when she had to stop reading at an exciting part of the book. She said that sometimes she "just read a paragraph on the next page." On another occasion, she indicated that she felt "sort of" frustrated when she read The Sea Egg because she couldn't understand what was happening. Despite this, however, she read the book carefully and tried to understand it.

Nancy's mother felt that reading had previously been difficult for Nancy.

I: So you feel she is enjoying her reading this year as compared to before?

Mrs. N: Umhmm, yes, she knows what to do with a book now.....

I: Do you read to her, or?

Mrs. N: No, not any more. She reads to herself.

I: Did you used to?

Mrs. N: I used to but I don't any more.

I: Talk to her about the books?

Mrs. N: Not really. I don't know. I just leave it. It's up to her now. I did a lot in the past though. Not in grade 6, but the first five grades. It was always a struggle.

Robby

Robby felt that two things made him anxious or upset when he was reading. The first was having to stop reading at an exciting part of the story.

I: Do you ever get upset or anxious?

Rb: Um - Um no. Until I finish the chapter. I usually read a paragraph more.

I: Oh. Does it help to read a paragraph more?

Rb: Yeah, because then I'm not in suspense.

The other thing that would upset Robby was being disturbed when he was trying to read.

David

David said that he got upset or anxious when reading interfered with something else that he wanted to do.

D: Like when I have to read and I'm doing something else?

I: Umhmm.

D: Like when I'm really into my writing and I have to change over into novel studies?

I: Umhmm.

D: And I really want to do some more writing? Then I get upset. And then on some days when I'm writing, I can't write nothing cause I want to read. And sometimes I'll read a book in writing.

Daryl

Daryl had ~~difficulty~~ reading, and it was this that made him anxious or upset while reading.

I: Do you ever get anxious or upset when you're reading?

Dr: Yeah, like when I was doing that owl report? When I was reading, I'd have to put up my own words. They had such big words, I couldn't understand it so I'd get so frustrated and I'd just get mad. I just left it and I couldn't finish that much more information. It had such big words I couldn't understand it.

On another occasion, Daryl explained, "Well I don't really feel upset, but I kind of feel mad when the

book's boring and since I already chose it, I have to - I can't - I have to finish reading it."

Summary

Four of the six students in this study suggested that it was the content of the book that made them anxious or upset. They became anxious to know the outcome during an exciting part of the novel, particularly if they had to stop at that point in their group novel studies. Rhonda also became upset when the characters did something she did not agree with or when things did not work out the way she wanted them to.

Robby and David both found situations outside the book upsetting. Robby did not like to be bothered by other students when he was reading and David did not like being told to read when he was working on something else.

Daryl and Nancy both found it frustrating to read material that was too difficult. Nancy had difficulty following the plot in The Sea Egg, but she finished reading it anyway. Daryl found that he could not understand the words in the nonfiction books he was using for a report. Because of this difficulty, he left this information out of his report.

Daryl was the only student who mentioned feeling upset or angry because he had to finish reading a book that he felt was boring.

COMPARING A BOOK AND A MOVIE

Children today are constantly exposed to television and movies. This form of entertainment takes little effort on the part of the observer and relies heavily on sight and sound. By examining students' understanding of the differences between movies and novels, we can arrive at a better sense of their appreciation of reading.

The students in this class had all had at least one experience with reading a book and seeing a movie of the same book since Ms. Samuels had read Bridge to Terabithia to them and then shown the movie during classtime. Because of this, most of the students, when asked to compare a book and a movie, responded that the book had more detail and the movie left some things out.

Jerry

Jerry commented on the difference in the amount of detail and use of imagination, but he also added some further insight.

I: Compare reading a book to seeing a movie. Not necessarily a movie of the same book, just a book or a movie.

J: Um, books are better.

I: Why?

J: It depends. Cause in a book you can have the detail and you have, you can tell what they're thinking. In a movie, they don't - you can see the detail, but you - sometimes you can't understand what it is. In a book, it can tell you - and you can't - and you can't really - um - tell what he's thinking. In a book, you can.

I: Tell what the character is thinking?

J: Yeah. (pause) Sometimes, well, at first in The Hobbit when Bilbo went down again into the lair of Smaug and the dwarves told him he was crazy and all that and I sort of agreed with them and I wanted to know why he was doing that, but then it told a little bit farther on in the book.

Rhonda

When I first asked Rhonda to compare a book and a movie, she quickly responded that she preferred the

novel. She later had an experience which made her change her mind somewhat.

I: When you were doing author's festival, how did you choose what you were going to read from Anne of Green Gables?

R: Oh, I was just - I just - um - daydreaming for a second. I thought of all the stuff that I enjoyed the most and most of it was funny parts. Um - but - I was thinking of the movie so I went and looked it up in the book, and that's why I'm saying that movies are funnier cause just thinking of that one. Because lots of times - um - you'd read parts of the book, it wouldn't have - um - the people talking to each other making big scenes. You'd just have the - um - have the author saying how mad they were. So it wasn't as good, I don't think, that part, as the movie - which surprises me.

Despite this, Rhonda felt that in general books were better because they gave more detail and told more about the characters.

Nancy

Nancy did not like to read a book and see the movie based on the book; she preferred to do one or the other.

I: What's it like to read a book or see a movie? Could you compare them?

N: I like reading the book. It depends which one I do first. If I read the book first, I'll probably like the book better. But if I saw the movie first then I just don't want to read the book.

I: You would or you wouldn't?

N: I wouldn't. It just spoils it somehow. Cause usually I imagine my own characters in my own mind, but if I see the movie it just ruins my imagination.

I: Ok. What about when you read the book first? You said you like the book first. Why?

N: It has more detail. Sometimes they skip out parts that are really interesting. And Bridge to Terabithia like they were supposed to have a rope to swing across. Instead they had a tree. That didn't seem right.

Nancy had a similar difficulty when Ms. Samuels read to them. She didn't like reading books that Ms. Samuels had read to the class.

N: I don't - well - some - well when Ms. Samuels reads, she, she reads, I don't know, but I can't read like her. She 'emphases' everything like that. Only sometimes I do that. And then it sounds really good, but when I read it doesn't - it doesn't happen to me. Only in books that she hasn't read, it happens sometimes.

Apparently, once Nancy had been in contact with one version of a novel, she found it difficult to construct her own interpretation and, therefore, preferred not to reread books that she had already been exposed to.

Robby

When asked to compare books and movies, Robby at first replied that books were better because they had more detail and movies left parts out. Upon further probing, however, it became apparent that Robby did prefer the movie version.

Rb: Yeah. Well something like Back to the Future well if a book comes out after that, the book

will be no good. Everybody will think the movie's better.

I: Why?

Rb: Well, I don't know. Cause you can't really write a book off a movie. It would be too hard to remember and all that. Get all the details.

I: So you prefer watching a movie to reading a book.

Rb: Watching the movie.

I: And what is there you like about the movie that a book wouldn't have.

Rb: I don't know. The book doesn't have sound effects, what the car would look like. You can't imagine what the car looks like and you need movies for that.

Robby also preferred watching television to reading a novel because "It's more exciting, and it doesn't take as long to watch something." The time element did seem to be significant to Robby. He frequently stated that he did not read because he didn't have time.

David

David volunteered some information comparing movies and novels when we were discussing his novel study group who were reading Old Yellar at the time.

I: You enjoyed working with that group?

D: I watched the movie two nights ago.

I: Yeah, it was on "Walt Disney" wasn't it?

D: Yeah, the book's a lot better.

I: Is it? Why?

D: The movie is so different. It forgets the things. Like you know when Travis fell off that sand cliff?

I: Umhmm.

D: Onto the hogs? He fell off a tree in the movie. And in the book, he wasn't able to run. He crawled over?

I: Yeah.

D: He was just running like this. (demonstrates) as fast as he could with his legs.

David seemed quite disappointed with the movie.

Daryl

Daryl found movies easier to understand than reading.

I: How do you feel about the books?

Dr: Oh, I prefer seeing the movie instead of reading books. Then I don't have to think and I just enjoy myself, looking at the film, what the people look like, you know.

I: Are you thinking of Old Yellar when you say that? What kind of things would you notice in the movie that you wouldn't notice in the book?

Dr: Well, what the people looked like and how terrifying it was when the bull was attacking Jim and that you could see how it was done instead of just thinking it.

Daryl also commented on television.

Dr: I like television better (than reading) because I - it gives you more - it gives you just as much detail - but - and I don't have to read.

Summary

All the students in this study except for Daryl felt that novels provided information that movies left out and that novels stimulated the imagination. Daryl found that he could not understand the mood in a book as well as he could in a movie.

Four of the students commented on ways that a movie was better than a novel. Rhonda found that the movie Anne of Green Gables was funnier than the book although she did not notice this until she tried to look up particular incidents in the book. Nancy found that she preferred the version that she was exposed to first. If she saw the movie first, it ruined her ability to create her own images and, therefore, she did not wish to read the book, but if she read the book first, the movie was disappointing. Robby felt that movies had better sound and visual effects and took less time than reading a book. Daryl found movies easier to understand.

Jerry preferred to read novels because he could then tell what the character was thinking. He also mentioned that in a movie sometimes it was difficult for the audience to determine what was being shown on the screen.

CHILDREN VIEWING THEMSELVES AS READERS

Students' confidence in themselves as readers may affect their attitude toward reading. They begin to compare certain events in the story to events in their own lives and are disappointed when the novel does not seem realistic. They learn to expect certain things in

a novel and begin to criticize the writing if it does not fulfil their expectations.

The students in this class often used their own experiences to arrive at a better understanding of events in the novel they were reading. In the following excerpt, three boys discuss the amount of damage they think will be caused by the upcoming hurricane in the novel, The Cay. During the discussion, the boys draw upon previous experiences and knowledge to come to a better understanding of the event. By the time they finish discussing, all three boys are anxious to complete the book.

Jerry: But it's not - It doesn't suck anything up. That's a tornado.

Ken: Yeah, but I think with the - with the heavy rain going against the rope and all that, the rope will come off or fall to the ground and then with the waves coming over the island, I think it'll just blow it away.

Jerry: But they made - they made it on a high cliff so the waves can't-

Craig: 40 - it's only 42 feet.

Jerry: Yeah, but they don't have tidal waves. Well not in a hurricane they don't.

Craig: Yes they do.

Jerry: No they don't

Craig: Winds cause waves.....

Jerry: They'll only have a wave 20 feet high. No higher than that.

Craig: They'll only be ankle deep. I've - I've seen waves 20 feet high on normal days.

Ken: I've seen them. Cause I've heard of cases where they've had huge waves.

Craig: Lake Superior

Ken: Like tidal waves and things due to the wind.

Craig: Lake Superior, a wave went over top of the light house.....

These discussions seemed to help the students' understanding of the novel, but they also appeared to stimulate interest in reading the book. Frequently after discussions of this nature, group members would agree to read thirty to forty pages before the next group meeting, which would be in two or three days.

During their group discussions, it became apparent that students had certain ideas of what to expect in a novel.

Student 1: Why do you think that he's going to find out? That she's going to find out?

Student 2: Cause

Student 3: The problem has to be solved in the story.

Student 2: Cause otherwise it wouldn't be a very good story.

Student 1: Well look. On the other hand, she could go the other way and find out that it was Nadi who did it and she does the opposite thing.

Student 2: Yeah, but, she - um-

Student 1: What I'm trying to say is that the author could go the other way. Instead of everything being a happy ending, it could be a sad ending.

On other occasions, students became quite critical of the author's use of foreshadowing.

Student 1: Do you think the author gave away too much?

Student 2: Yes.

Student 1: Oh, throughout the whole book?

Student 2: Well not in this chapter, but a couple of chapters afterwards.

Student 1: I think in all the chapters he's giving away too much and in this chapter he's really bad.

Because the students had been well exposed to novels, they were able to use the clues in the book to determine how the story would end and were disappointed when the ending was too obvious.

The students in this class also seemed to view the author as a person who had to work at his/her writing and could make mistakes. In one conversation, Ken and Jerry discussed the research done by the author of The Cay.

Ken: Do you think that this would take a lot of research and how would you do it?

Jerry: It would take a lot of research. It would because (pause) No I don't think it would. It might though.

Ken: But I think the first bit is all research and I think the second is just kinda - is just kinda out of your own head.

On another occasion, several students discussing Summer of the Swans felt that the author needed to improve her ending.

Student 1: Well did you like the book?

Student 2: Yeah, I think it was exciting.

Student 3: Yeah, I like the book only I didn't like the ending.

Student 2: Nor did I

Student 3: Like it was sort of a good ending cause like they found Charlie and everything, but I didn't really like it cause it was like she had forgotten something and would keep adding things like that - like the last chapter.

Ms. Samuels: What kind of things. Give some-

Student 3: Like after they found Charlie. I thought the book was over, but she added a chapter like when Joe asked her if she wanted to go see the card game and stuff like that. I thought they didn't really need it.

The students were able to discuss and evaluate the novel and did not feel threatened because the author was a professional and someone they did not know.

Summary

Discussions about the novel being read seemed to help the students come to a better understanding of the events in the novel and to stimulate interest in the chapters not yet read. The children in this class were

able to approach a novel with certain expectations and could evaluate it in accordance with those expectations. When students are confident in their ability to read and evaluate a novel, it is likely that their attitude will be more positive.

HOW CHILDREN FEEL ABOUT BOOKS

How children feel about the books they are reading can be inferred both from their behavior and from what they say. In this class, the students working on group novels would decide on how much they would like to read during the next two or three days. These conversations often seemed to reflect an enthusiasm for reading.

Craig: Let's read to the end of the book.

Jerry: Wait, this is (turns pages) That's 1 - 2 That's another five chapters.

Craig: Look, I'll just count how many pages it is.

Jerry: 144 minus 111.

Craig: That's not much.

Jerry: That's a hundred and thir - that's 33 pages.

Craig: Well last time we read -

Ken: 33 pages. And this is really exciting.

Jerry: Last time we read 33 pages and the time after that we read 33 pages.

Craig: So? Let's read it then.

Ken: Yeah.

Even poorer readers like Ken seemed anxious to read through the group novels.

Jerry

Ms. Samuels felt that perhaps Jerry read less toward the end of the year than at the beginning. She had observed that Jerry read less and less in class and he tended to either write or talk to other children more. This conclusion was not supported by either Jerry or his mother.

Jerry's mother, in fact, felt that Jerry had increased the amount of reading.

Mrs. W: Uh, changes not with diff - more in volume. Ok? He has really, you know, increased the volume of reading more.... He gets a lot of pleasure out of the reading. Ok? Which he's always had but - again - there were periods of time when he wouldn't read that much or - you know.

I: Umhmm. When you talk about his pleasure in reading, how does - how do you know

that he is getting pleasure out of it - his reading?

Mrs. W: (laughs) 'Cause he can't get his nose out of the book!

Jerry's mother had also noticed that Jerry read more fiction this year than he had previously. This was something Jerry also commented on several times.

J: Ok. Novels, comic books, I've read a lot of fact books, like before I - like I only got into reading fantasy books when I came into this school because - uh - Chris, he-he really liked them and then he showed me some of the books and I started reading them and I never knew that I really liked fantasy books cause all I was reading were non-fact like - no not non-fact, nonfiction. (laughs) And now I know that I like different kinds of books than just nonfiction books.

On another occasion, Jerry stated:

I never - I never really wanted - I never really liked to read before. I read a lot of comic books before and I read just fact books and - but now I want to read a lot more.

When asked about his favorite type of reading, Jerry replied, "Well either novels or comic books. I'm

not sure. 'Cause I like reading something that's really long. I like reading real long books."

Rhonda

Rhonda enjoyed reading.

I: So you enjoy reading?

R: Yeah.

I: What do you enjoy about it?

R: Well, it's relaxing. Lots of times when instead of watching t.v. like my brother does, lots of times I just read. When I'm mad about something or - I just - I don't know - or when I'm bored, I sometimes I just want to read.

On another occasion, she was able to expand further on why she enjoyed reading novels.

I: You said that out of all those types of reading materials that we talked about, you said that you liked books the best. Why?

R: Well, because - um - I like reading a lot of fiction and that's mostly what books I - well I don't know, but the kind that I read. And - um - they have a lot of feeling in them, and they're written to make you - um - feel excited and sad and - um - you want to read more and stuff. I don't know. Lot's of them

are true experience. Reminds me of me sometimes.

When I observed Rhonda starting a new book, she never appeared to have difficulty getting involved. She would become immersed in the novel very quickly and only rarely interrupt her reading to look around the room or talk to other students. When I spoke to her, however, it seemed that she had mixed feelings about both starting and finishing a novel.

I: What's it like to start a book?

R: Well, I think it's pretty fun because you don't know what it's going to be about and - um - sometimes it can be boring. Some books are pretty boring at the beginning - but - I don't know it's - it's pretty good.

I: What's it like to finish a book?

R: Well sometimes you feel sad - um - you want to read more - you don't want it to end. And sometimes you're glad cause you don't like it that much and you're glad to get through it and - uh -

I: Can you give me an example of a book that you were sad to finish?

R: Well - um - it was the last one from the Laura Ingles Wilder - <u>These Happy Golden Years</u> or something like that and I was sad because

there wasn't any more books to read and - uh - it ended really nice. I forget how it ended but I kept on reading it over and over again.

I: The end of it?

R: Yeah.

Rhonda's parents also felt that Rhonda enjoyed reading. Her mother commented that Rhonda frequently liked to share her books with the family either reading an excerpt aloud or rendering an account of the section she was currently reading.

Nancy

Nancy felt that her reading behavior had changed over the year.

I: Do you do more reading at home? More than you used to?

N: Yeah, cause this - this program makes me want to read more books that I haven't read before, because before I (lowers voice) barely ever read any books. (laughs) Well, I couldn't ever find any books in the library.

When talking about various books that she had read during the year, she made comments like, "It's fun to read." and, "All of the books so far that I read - good novels, were really good ones."

Nancy did not like finishing a book.

I: What's it like to finish a book?

N: I don't - if it's a real good book, I don't want to finish. I want to keep reading it because it just makes me, uh, read more and more. And sometimes if there's a sequel, it's not as good as the first book.

I: So what's it like to finish? When you have to put it down?

N: I don't like it.

I: Why?

N: Cause it makes me feel sad cause I have to stop reading it all the time.

Robby

Robby enjoyed reading comics, but he was quite neutral in his attitude toward reading novels.

I: Do you like reading?

Rb: Yeah.

I: Like it a lot, like it a little? It's ok? If I have to?

Rb: Probably in the middle.

On another occasion, in response to the same question, Robby had a little more to say.

Rb: Yeah, I guess, sometimes. It's the adventure and suspense and stuff like that.

I: How's that?

Rb: Well, you get to see what people go through sometimes, see funny things and you get to (long pause) you get to learn about the book or something like that.

Ms. Samuels felt that Robby had made some definite improvements during the year.

Ms. S: But, as far as enjoying reading, I think that - I would say that of the four of them [Jerry, Nancy, Rhonda, and Robby], Robby seems to me to have improved the most, in enjoyment.

Robby's mother also commented on the change in Robby.

Mrs. M: You know, I think he likes books, but he's - I think he's surprised when he gets into a book that it's good. You know, I think because he hasn't - he wasn't a reader before, he thought that they were all boring after the first page - if you don't get into it then you put it back on the shelf.

Even at the end of the year, Robby was still having difficulty "getting into" a book. He often would choose a book, read a few pages, and then abandon it.

David

David liked reading, but he seemed to view it as something to do when nothing else was available.

I: Do you like reading?

D: Yeah.

I: What do you like about it?

D: Well it's fun cause books are not a waste of time and stuff. When you're bored or something, like you have no one to play with, you can go and read.

He responded in this manner on several occasions when he was asked if he liked reading.

Daryl

Daryl did not enjoy reading.

I: Do you enjoy reading?

Dr: No.

I: Umhmm. Do you want to tell me about that? What don't you like about it?

Dr: Oh - uh - sometimes I think it's a waste of time. I mean I like to read books like about interesting things like that guy [a

meteorologist] said today and things like that.

I: Umhmm.

Dr: Like science books, I learn a lot.

I: Umhmm.

Dr: And I just don't like reading books - story books like that.

I: Ok. Is there anything in particular about story books that you don't like?

Dr: Well, I don't like reading cause - I just don't like reading. I like it when the teacher reads it.

I: Umhmm. What do you like about it when the teacher reads to you.

Dr: Well I just - I don't have to think so much. I can just sit here and relax and think about what the book is about.

I: Umhmm. So you have trouble thinking about what the book is about when you're reading it?

Dr: Yeah.

I: So you're concentrating on what, when you're reading?

Dr: The words.

Daryl's dislike of reading seemed to be related to the difficulty he was having with it.

There were two apparent exceptions to this attitude. Daryl told me that when he read Gang Wars at his previous school, "I liked it so much I couldn't put it down." Also, although he only said that Dear Mr. Henshaw was "Okay," when he was reading it, Daryl seemed quite unaware of things that were happening around him.

Summary

Jerry, Rhonda, and Nancy seemed to enjoy reading for its entertainment qualities. Jerry and Nancy increased the volume of their reading during the year. Rhonda and Jerry had started to enjoy different types of literature that they were introduced to.

David enjoyed reading because it relieved him from boredom. Robby tended to be neutral in his attitude toward reading. He didn't mind reading at school and sometimes enjoyed the suspense and adventure, but at home he had things he would rather do. Robby did enjoy reading comics, however. Daryl did not like reading himself, but he did enjoy listening to the teacher read to him.

HOW CHILDREN FEEL ABOUT THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

In general, the students tended to be quite positive about the language arts program. All of the

students I spoke to indicated that they preferred this program to their program of the previous year, a language arts program that used a basal reader and workbooks. Jerry's comment was fairly typical.

I: Tell me about your language arts program. How do you feel about it?

J: I like it.

I: Why?

J: Well - it's a lot better than worksheets and workbooks and vocabulary and stuff. And it's funner.

I first asked Daryl about the reading program a few weeks after he arrived in the school. He was confused about what I meant.

I: How about reading?

Dr: I didn't like reading. I like it h- We don't get reading here do we?

I: I don't know. Do you?

Dr: No. In my old school, we had to do like - do like um vocabulary and all that. And I didn't like it.

By this time, Daryl had read about half of two novels, but he called this his novel studies, not reading.

Nancy was quite articulate about why she liked the language arts program.

N: ...If you get to choose your own books, you get to find what kind of books you like instead of always reading one kind.....You get to - to learn more about books and everything, and she - and you get to - um - group novels - and - um - you answer questions and everything that other people ask and you learn more about the questions and the people in the book than you do in the other case.

Although most of the students felt that they learned more when they discussed the novels, they also found that they were sometimes frustrated with their novel study groups. Often students did not complete their work and were therefore unavailable for discussions. At other times group members would agree with anything said in order to complete the discussion quickly. Several students mentioned that they were glad that the groups changed everytime they started a new book so that they had a chance to work with and get to know different classmates.

Nancy also appreciated the positive comments that she received from her teacher.

Nancy: ...and she says you're getting better at reading books so that makes you want to read more. What she says.

Many students commented on the writing portion of the language arts program. They appreciated being able to write on any topic they chose and for as long as they chose. Rhonda mentioned that she felt her writing was better quality when she did not have to meet a deadline.

Summary

The students in this study liked many aspects of the language arts program. They appreciated being able to choose their own books to read and their own topics to write about. They found being able to discuss novels with their peers valuable. When they were working in groups, many students found it frustrating that members of their group sometimes did not complete their work.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Children's attitudes toward reading are reflected in their behaviors and their comments about reading.

Most of the students in this class read more than fifteen novels during the year. Despite the number of books read, all six of the key informants often experienced difficulty in choosing a novel to read and usually depended upon recommendations from friends and teachers.

All of the key informants had difficulty reading in the classroom because of the distractions caused by other students. The distractions in the classroom seemed to affect them more when they were starting their novels and when they were at a slow-moving point in the plot of their books. Four of the six students preferred to read at home where they could have both comfort and quiet. At school, they often found that they had to choose between comfort or relative quiet since the story corner, which was furnished with cushions, was often occupied with students who were talking or misbehaving. The other two students preferred to read at school since they felt they had better things to do at home.

With the exception of the student new to the program, all the key informants rarely became anxious because of difficulty with reading. It was generally the content of the novel that upset these students, although one student commented that he was upset when other students disturbed him while he was reading. The two girls both had difficulty reading the novel, The Sea Egg, which they were reading for the Alberta Book Awards. Neither of them, however, expressed anxiety about reading the book, and both eventually completed it.

In comparing novels and movies, four of the six students felt that there were positive aspects of each. The other two students preferred to watch a movie over reading a book. Of the six students, only the boy who was reading the most difficult novels commented that a novel gave more insights than a movie did into a character's feelings.

Students were able to use events in their own lives to help them arrive at a better understanding of the novel they were reading. They also had an understanding of the structure of novels and were able to use this knowledge in interpreting and evaluating a new book.

Four of the key informants enjoyed reading, one had a neutral attitude toward reading, and the student who was new to the program disliked reading. Four of the students claimed to enjoy reading more at the end of the year than they did at the beginning of the year. This feeling was accompanied by an increase in the amount of reading and/or a change in the types of novels read. Of the other two students, one enjoyed reading but had not noticed any change in his attitude.

All of the students interviewed felt positively about the language arts program, some of them preferring the writing portion and others preferring

the reading portion of the class. The students valued the group discussions of novels even though they found it frustrating when some members of the group did not complete their assignments. Students also appreciated the choices they were allowed in both reading and writing. One student commented on the importance of positive comments received from the teacher.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

> Our assumption is that enduring reading habits will develop if young people, through their years of schooling, are continuously exposed to a rich environment of books. (Grambs, 1959, p.15)

This chapter provides a brief overview of the study, a discussion of the major findings and implications of those findings. Suggestions for further study are also made.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to reach a better understanding of students' attitudes toward and about reading and their interactions with literature in a literature-based language arts program. In order to accomplish this, the researcher spent fifteen weeks observing a literature-based language arts class. Several types of data were collected; extensive field notes were kept, group novel discussions were tape recorded, student notebooks and lists of the books read during the year were collected, and the teacher and selected students and parents were interviewed. An

attempt was made to find themes and patterns within this data.

Research Question 1

How is the language arts period organized?

The language arts class used in this study was using the whole language approach. There was an equal emphasis on reading and writing. During their writing time, students were encouraged to choose their own topic and form of writing. Student to student and teacher to student writing conferences occurred frequently and at all stages of writing. Students were expected to 'share' their writing with friends, the class, and with other classes in the school, both by reading their work to these people and by 'publishing' their writing.

Reading was taught through the use of both group and individual novel studies. In group novel studies, the members of the group would decide on the amount to be read, write summaries of the section read, and prepare three questions to ask and discuss with other members of the group. Group conferences would involve reading these summaries and discussing the questions. During individual novel studies, students would read a novel that was selected in consultation with the

teacher, write two summaries of the novel, one when they had read half the book and one when they had finished reading the book, and then either complete three activity cards or make a written response to the reading. In addition to novel studies, the students had about fifteen minutes a day to read materials of their own choice. The teacher also read to them daily.

The teacher showed an interest in novels, frequently reading new books herself and discussing them with the class. Books and other reading materials were displayed throughout the classroom.

Research Question 2

What are the children's attitudes toward themselves as readers? Do they see themselves as able readers capable of evaluating the quality of a novel?

Five of the students in this study seemed to have confidence in themselves as readers. They felt little anxiety about their ability to read. The things that did upset them while they were reading were usually the events in the novel or the disruptions in the classroom. In attempting to read a novel that was too advanced for them, two of the students were able to identify the source of difficulty and plan an approach

that helped them finish reading and come to some understanding of the book.

The student who joined the class in April felt that he was a poor reader. He sometimes became frustrated when he had difficulty understanding the words. He found that while reading he was concentrating on the words rather than on the events of the novel. Because of this, he preferred to have someone read to him so that he could listen to and understand the story.

Most of the students in the class expected novels to meet certain criteria. They understood that the author was able to manipulate the plot, and were therefore able to make realistic predictions and judgements based on their previous experiences with novels.

Research Question 3

What is the nature of student interactions with the reading materials? How do they relate the material read to their own lives?

Students usually had difficulty choosing a novel to read. They often depended upon the teacher or friends to help them with their choices. When they chose books without this advice, they were often

dissatisfied with them. The poorer readers generally read only one or two pages of a novel before abandoning it. More experienced readers often read a large portion of a novel before deciding that it was unsatisfactory.

Students were able to utilize their own experiences in discussing the novels. By examining comparative situations in their own lives, they could come to a better understanding of the events and characters in their reading. These group discussions were comprehensive and the students demonstrated an ability to make reasonable decisions.

Research Question 4

How do the students feel about language arts and particularly about reading? How are these attitudes reflected in their work habits, their talk, and their leisure activities?

Most of the students in this language arts program had a positive attitude toward reading. They read a large number of books in the course of the year, and many of them read these books in their leisure time at home. Most students were seen reading during their leisure time at school at least once while I was observing in the classroom.

When children were reading, their behavior varied depending upon how involved they were in the novel. Each of the students at some time during my observations was interested enough in his/her reading to ignore distractions. This ability to read despite disruptions in the classroom did not appear to be related to reading ability or attitude. The boy who was considered the best reader by the teacher and who read voraciously at home was as easily distracted as the boy who did not like reading.

The key informants' comments about reading were generally positive. Four of the students enjoyed reading, and enjoyed talking about reading. Of the other two students, one did not mind reading, but preferred to participate in more active projects. The other student who joined the class in April did not like to read. The four parents who were interviewed all felt that their children had increased the amount or the variety of materials read during the year.

IMPLICATIONS

For language arts programs to be more effective in encouraging positive attitudes toward reading, it is important that we give our students more exposure to and help with reading novels. After a year of reading

novels, the students in this study were still having difficulty choosing and starting to read a book. Some of these students may not have become interested in reading novels without the assistance this type of program offers.

Teachers should be familiar with a variety of children's novels so that they can help children choose books to read. Since it is apparent that students do experience difficulty choosing books that are suitable and interesting, it is important that teachers and parents are willing and able to help them with these choices.

The positive effects of group novel discussions are also apparent. In this way, students are able to discuss and clarify their understanding of a novel in a non-threatening environment. These group meetings also seem to stimulate an interest in reading the novel under discussion. This is important since many students seem to have difficulty reading through the first section of a novel.

Problems arose in this class because of disruptions while students were trying to read. Teachers should be aware that good readers often prefer to read at home where they can have both comfort and quiet. These conditions may be duplicated to some

extent in a classroom, but it is impossible to eliminate all distractions. Teachers should, however, try to minimize movement and noise while students are reading in the class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Most of the students in this study had only been in a literature-based language arts program for one year. The positive attitude toward the program could be due to the novelty of the approach. It is important to discover if students who experience this type of language arts program for several years are still as enthusiastic about reading and about the program.

It has been suggested that people who learn to enjoy reading as a child will develop lifelong reading habits. (Grambs, 1959, Ribovich and Erickson, 1980; Robinson and Haase, 1980) A longitudinal study to determine if literature-based language arts programs would have a lasting positive effect would be valuable.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This study used a qualitative approach in an attempt to arrive at a better understanding of children's attitudes toward reading in a literature-based language arts class. In using a qualitative approach, the researcher was able to study

the whole child, examining both what was said and what was done, and the relationship between the two types of information.

A literature-based language arts program does appear to stimulate a positive attitude toward reading in grade six students. Factors that appeared important were the teacher's interest in children's novels, her ability to help students choose suitable reading material, small group discussions of novels, and encouragement to read from both home and school.

It is important to remember that the teacher plays a crucial role in the classroom. When asked what she thought was the most important part of the language arts program that her child was in, one mother simply replied, "The teacher."

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
February 18, 1986

Dear Parents:

I am a graduate student working on my master's thesis at the University of Alberta. I am interested in studying a language arts class where the students read primarily from novels. I would like to find out how students, parents, and teachers feel about the effects of such a program.

To gain the information I need for this study, I will observe language arts periods, look at students' written assignments, talk to students when it is possible to do so without disturbing their work, interview some students and their parents, and ask students to complete a reading attitude inventory. The reading attitude inventory asks for students' opinions and therefore there are no right or wrong answers. There will be no achievement test given as a part of this study. All participants in this study, teacher, students, and parents, will remain anonymous.

I would like your son/daughter to take part in this study as a member of Ms. Samuels's class. If you and your son/daughter are agreeable to this, please sign the consent form below and return it to Ms. Samuels by Friday, February 21. Thank-you for your assistance.

Faye Symon
Master's student,
University of Alberta.

I, _____, (am willing, am not
student's name
willing) to take part in the study described above.

_____
signature

My son/daughter, _____,
student's name

(may, may not) take part in the study described above.

_____
signature

I, _____, (am willing, am not willing) to
parent's name
be interviewed as part of this study.

_____
signature

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH DARYL

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH DARYL

I: So, tell me what you think about language arts.

Dr: Hmmm, it's not bad.

I: It's not bad. It's not bad here? It's not bad at your other school?

Dr: Yeah, it was bad at my other school 'cause there we were learning about verbs and nouns.

I: What's wrong with that?

Dr: It's boring.

I: What's boring about it?

Dr: Well, y-y-you-you learned it already two years in a row. Now you're learning it again.

I: Yeah? So you figured you knew it pretty well?

Dr: Yeah.

I: How about reading?

Dr: I didn't like reading. I like it h- We don't get reading here do we?

I: I don't know. Do you?

Dr: No. In my old school, we had to do like-do stuff like um vocabulary and all that. And I didn't like it.

I: Umhmm. Did you read anything, like out of your textbook or?

Dr: Yeah, I read a whole bunch of stories like um <u>It's Me, Christy</u>, and um...

I: Is that a book or short story?

Dr: Oh yeah, <u>It's Me, Christy</u>, that's a book.

I: That's o.k., you're doing fine.

Dr: Ummm-mm-mm and uh, um-m-m I can't remember 'em.

I: O.k.. Did you like It's Me, Christy?

Dr: No. (laughs)

I: Why?

Dr: Well, it's boring.

I: What was boring about it?

Dr: Well it was- like there was no excitement or anything, there was just like....boring.

I: Boring. O.k.. What are you reading here?

Dr: Right now you mean?

I: Umhmm.

Dr: Uh, The King of the Grizzlies.

I: Is that a good book?

Dr: Uh huh.

I: What's good about it?

Dr: It's about a grizzly bear who takes its - it's about a momma grizzly bear who takes his three cubs hunting and this, I mean, um, down to a river and stuff and then this hunter shot two cubs and, um, the mother left one cub on its own.

I: Yeah, so that's where you are right now?

Dr: Yeah.

I: How did you decide to read that book?

Dr: Um, the cover looked good and then I read the back and it seemed pretty good.

I: Was that a book from the class, or is that a library book?

Dr: From class.

I: From the classroom. What are you reading for your novel study?

Dr: That's it.

I: For your group novel study.

Dr: Oh, Old Yellar

I: Old Yellar, how about that one. Is it good?

Dr: Yeah, I've read it twice though, and I saw the movie twice.

I: Umhmm. Which would you rather do, read it or see the movie?

Dr: See the movie.

I: How come?

Dr: Well, 'cause, well I don't like reading 'cause I have a hard time reading. (pause)

I: So what do you think of Old Yellar? Would that be a good book?

Dr: Yeah. (pause)

I: Umhmm? (Pause) O.k.. Tell me what you know about the language arts program in this school. I know you've only been here a month, but what do you do in language arts here?

Dr: What do you mean? Well we like, for language we uh do novel study, and we read, you get a book and you read it then we write a half summary, half a summary, like half the book we read, and then we write, uh, the end of the, the rest of the book. Yeah, and then you get to, when you're done that you get three cards from this thing, three different cards and you do something on them, activity cards.

I: What kind of things are on the activity cards?

Dr: Well, there's like word search, um, attack words, like we find prefix and suffixes, then, in the book, in your book, and then you have to write another one that has the same prefix and that.

I: Umhmm.

Dr: Also there's gr- there's vocabulary. A whole bunch of them.

I: Umhmm. O.k.. How about writing?

Dr: Writing-writing-writing. Do we get writing? Oh yeah, writing-writing-writing. Oh well that's pretty fun like you do whatever you like. All sorts of things, like you write stories or you can do crossword puzzles, word search, um, poems, um everything.

I: Umhmm. (pause) Do you like doing that?

Dr: No.

I: You don't like doing that. How come?

Dr: 'Cause I'm no good.

I: You're no good at it? 'Cause you're out of practice?

Dr: Well, I'm just new at it, and I'm not very good. I'm not too fond of it.

I: Umhmm. Well, it takes time. Well that's very helpful, Darcy. Thank-you until next time.

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH JERRY

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH JERRY

I: Ok, Jerry. Maybe we could start by you telling me about one of the books you're reading right now.

J: Yeah. Um - I'm reading Beware the Fish by Gordon Korman. And I'm reading Lord of the Rings. (pause) And -

I: Tell me about them.

J: What the story's about?

I: Sure. Or how you feel about the story.

J: I really like The Lord of the Rings a lot 'cause it's like fantasy and it's exciting. Sometimes it gets boring and you sort of want to leave it, but I got past that part. (laughs)

I: What do you like about fantasy?

J: (pause) Um - like how they have different people - not real people, like the hobbits and the monsters. (laughs) I like monsters. And stuff like that. And I like - it's just exciting.

I: How about Beware the Fish?

J: It's funny. I also like funny books, but not as much as I like fantasy.

I: What are you reading for your individual novel study right now?

J: Beware the Fish

I: What about your group novel study?

J: Um, Old Yellar.

I: How's that?

J: Sad, some parts.

I: Are you finished it yet?

J: Nope, not yet. I'm at the part where Old Yellar gets torn apart by the hogs. And I (Pause)

I: What do you think is going to happen in the end?

J: Well, I think he's going to catch that disease. And then they'll have to shoot him, I think. Or something like that.

I: Any particular reason why you think that?

J: Because I saw the movie.

I: Do you ever reread books?

J: Umhmm. Yeah, sometimes.

I: Why would you reread a book? Is there a particular book that you reread?

J: Well, I read them because they're - um - very interesting. I sort of like to read them over and over again. Sometimes I read them over again to understand them more. 'Cause sometimes you don't understand them.

I: Can you think of a particular book that you've read more than once?

J: (pause) Um (pause) I read - I read The Hobbit three or four times. I really like that. I think it's better than Lord of the Rings. Well I'm only on the first part so I don't know really. But, um, I've read Our Man Weston. It's by Gordon Korman. I've read that three or four times.

I: Do you learn something new each time you read it?

J: Sort of. Like, I don't know, but sometimes.

I: Can you give me an example.

J: (laughs) Um - well you sort of see it from a different point of view.

I: Yeah.

J: I can't - I can't.

I: That's ok. (pause) How do you choose a book to read?

J: Well - uh - well I choose one - choose some that my friends really like, and I see if I like them and I read them. Sometimes they come out boring and - or really dumb, but - And (pause) well my dad likes mystery books and before he said that I should read - um - a James Bond, those big huge funny books (laughs) But I couldn't because they're just too big. And the printing was too small and I -

I: Lord of the Rings is as big as some of them.

J: I know but it's - I like Lord of the Rings but I don't really like mystery novels. I like fantasy better.

I: Umhmm. How about when you come to a library? How do you choose a book to take out here?

J: Well - um - (pause) Well, I don't know, I just look at books.

I: Umhmm. What do you look at? Do you look at the back of the cover, or the titles?

J: Titles, mainly.

I: What are you looking for?

J: Something that's interesting. Like something that sounds really neat.

I: And if you found something that sounds really interesting, what would you do?

J: Look it over. Cause like if it doesn't have anything on the back, then I look in the front cover.

I: Umhmm.

J: Part. And I - um- on the front cover part if they have an overleaf or on the back.

I: Do you ever start a book and then not read it?

J: Yeah.

I: Can you think of an example?

J: (long pause)

I: Ok, why, why would you leave a book?

J: Sometimes it gets really boring - like really boring. Like my mom - I can think of an example -

an example, but it's not mine. Like my mom, she tried to read - she started to read Lord of the Rings but she dropped out on the first couple of pages because she said it was really really boring. She thought it was stupid.

I: How much would you read before you stop.

J: Usually a chapter, a couple of chapters or so.

I: Umhmm. Good. Do you ever have trouble reading?

J: No.

I: Never? Never had a book where you ran into any problems?

J: Not really, no.

I: Ok. Do you ever feel upset or anxious when you're reading?

J: Yeah. Cause (pause) Yeah I do. Sometimes when I'm reading a book, I just want to skip ahead a couple of chapters to a real interesting part, if I know of an interesting part, and just read that. And -

I: What about when you're reading a sad book like Old Yellar?

J: Well, I don't really like sad books, but I sort of - well, I don't know, I have to read it. Like I don't have any choice, so.

I: Do you get upset when you're reading it?

J: No. No. It doesn't - it doesn't do anything to me.

I: Ok. How do you feel when you start a book? What's it like to start a book?

J: Um (long pause) I don't know. Uh (pause)

I: What about when you're opening the first page? Do you feel like reading it? Are you anxious to get into it? Are you wondering if you're going to like it? What does it feel like?

J: I'm wondering if I'm going to like it because I've read a lot of books. Some of them I don't really like at all, some of them, they're ok. I couldn't read The Sword in the Stone because I couldn't follow what was happening.

I: How much of it did you read before you stopped?

J: About two chapters, I guess.

I: So you gave it a good chance.

J: Yeah.

I: Do you have trouble starting a new book? When you finish your old one and you're going to start a new one, do you have trouble getting started.

J: Umhmm.

I: What causes the trouble?

J: Well, sometimes I might get a book that I think is really, really neat, and I start reading it and then my friend or somebody says that this book really isn't very good, and it sort of gets me discouraged of reading it. Like sometimes, I just don't want to read it. (pause)

I: What's it like to finish a book?

J: Relieving, especially if it's really long because I'm - Ok, I'm finished it!

I: So you're anxious to get finished?

J: Yeah.

I: Ok. Do your friends support you in your reading?

J: Sometimes, yeah.

I: In what way?

J: Well, (pause) well, I never really liked fantasy until I came to this school, because a friend in the class, Chris, he really likes fantasy and he showed me some of these books - I can't remember what they were but - and I looked at them and I thought they were really interesting so. And now I really like fantasy. I used to read just nonfiction, like fact books. Those are interesting to me, but not anymore.

I: Ok. How about your teacher, your parents? Do they support you with your reading?

J: Sometimes. My mom and dad don't really, but my - uh - Ms. Samuels does like because she - she mostly picks out humor books. Well she mostly picks humor books and real life stories for novel studies and individual - well - she doesn't pick individual. She just picks novel - like group novel studies.

I: Umhmm. Do you ever learn things from what you're reading?

J: Yeah. When I was reading nonfiction - like fact books, then I learned a lot, about stuff.

I: Umhmm. How about fiction books?

J: Not really, no I don't learn much.

I: How about about yourself? Do you learn about yourself when you're reading?

J: No.

I: How do you prefer to get your information about something? If you were to learn about owls. How would you prefer to learn about owls?

J: Um - um - I look in World Books, encyclopedias. Usually they have lots, but sometimes they don't have anything. And I ask my dad ' cause he knows lots about animals, and look in the library, the public in Edmonton.

I: So you prefer getting information from books rather than from films or your teacher?

J: Yeah.

I: Good. That's good for today. We should be able to finish next time.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH NANCY

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH NANCY

I: Ok. Where did we stop last time? Oh, we were talking about getting upset when you read. Have you thought of another time that you get upset when you're reading?

N: No.

I: No? Do you ever get upset because you're having trouble understanding what you're reading?

N: No. These books are pretty easy - that I have.

I: What about when you're reading nonfiction?

N: (...)

I: Like for your owl report.

N: I sometimes - like in the encyclopedia and everything, I get troubles reading that - I get my mom to help me or Ms. Samuels or someone else.

I: Yeah. Do you get upset about it?

N: No, not unless the whole thing I can't understand - then I just get frustrated.

I: Umhmm. How do you feel about your novel study group?

N: Sometimes - Well it's good sometimes cause only Tracy, I or Ken is always done - is always done our work and then we only have a small discussion and then it's just so small that Ms. Samuels comes and

asks us questions like - and it just doesn't seem right for Ms. Samuels to ask us questions. We should have our own and the rest of the group should be done. They should ask us their questions.

I: So you get upset about that?

N: Yeah. Cause I don't want to talk. (laughs) I don't know. It's just if not everybody's there, then I don't want to talk cause not everybody's talking with me.

I: So you feel like you're dominating the conversation?

N: Yeah.

I: Why don't you like that?

N: I don't know. Cause I run out of ideas.

I: Ok. How do you feel about the students in the group?

N: Um. They're a good group, cause Ken and Mark and Robby, well not really Robby, but Ken and Mark make a good discussion because sometimes they always argue and then we argue with them, you know, and so it sometimes makes the discussion more interesting. Robby doesn't have very much to say.

I: Umhmm. Does Robby not talk because he doesn't know what's happening, or because he's shy, or what do you think?

N: I think because he's shy because he usually doesn't talk.

I: Umhmm. How about materials you use for reading? How do you feel about them?

N: I don't know. I think it's good. I don't know.

I: Ok. What's good.

N: The way you have to ask questions and she used to give us questions and we had to answer them. Now we don't have to do that. We get to ask our own questions and answer them.

I: Umhmm. Ok. What other materials do you use for reading?

N: We use the book

I: Ok. How do you feel about the book?

N: Depends. Well all of the books so far that I read - good novels, were really good ones so.

I: And you have a choice in what books you read?

N: Yeah.

I: Ok. Do you prefer to silent read or oral read?

N: Silent. Cause when I oral read, I get m - w - words mixed up all the time and I get nervous all the time. People who are better than me probably think that I'm not a very good reader. It just scares me.

I: Umhmm. The words that you get mixed up on when you oral read - are those words you don't know, or?

N: Yeah, well sometimes I can't pronounce them cause I'm scared all the time but -

I: Well what would you do if you ran into those words when you were silent reading?

N: I would probably know which words they are. Probably. Cause I can just say them in my mind all the time and if I don't get it I'll just read it over and over. Or I'll look in the dictionary and see what it means. Or ask Ms. Samuels maybe.

I: Do you think that, um , sometimes the words we see in writing all the time sometimes we know what they mean but we don't know how to pronounce them?

N: Yeah, sometimes, cause when I was reading The Tomorrow City (...) I don't know. I think I could so I know some of the words I can't pronounce. I know what they mean. My sister does that sometimes. You know, "I can't say that word" and then I ask her what it means and she knows.

I: Ok. How do you feel about reading comics?

N: I like reading comics sometimes - um - I like reading "Mickey Mouse" comics or "Donald Duck" They make me laugh all the time.

I: Umhmm. Do you have them at home or?

N: Yeah, I have them downstairs under the bed.

I: Under your bed? Why are they under your bed?

N: Well, usually I'm comfortable or whatever and I don't like getting out of bed. If I can't reach anything to read, then I have to get out of my bed and then the bed gets cold so that's why I put them under my bed and then when I want them, I just bend over and pick them up.

I: Ok. What's your favorite type of reading?

N: Books?

I: Books, magazine, newspaper?

N: Book, um, mystery.

I: Can you list off a few of the things you read?

N: I read comics, and I read, sometimes at home I read magazines and I have my novel at home, I read that and the newspaper I read.

I: Do you read other students' books in the classroom?

N: No.

I: You don't?

N: The ones at the back?

I: The books that they publish.

N: Oh, yeah, I read that. And my brother, if he's reading some sort of book, I'll read the back because I just want to.

I: Ok. So out of all those, what's your favorite?

N: Um. Comics and suspense books. Cause the comics you have the pictures and you can sort of see what's happening if you don't understand something. And then the suspense books - the suspense - well it just makes me want to read.

I: When do you like to read?

N: When I'm in bed.

I: Ok. How long do you usually have then?

N: Well, if I'm reading and it's around ten o'clock, my dad comes down and tells us we only have five or ten minutes to read because it's getting late and we have to go to sleep, and - but usually I read until ten.

I: And so what time do you go to bed usually?

N: Um 8:30.

I: 8:30? So you read for an hour and a half?

N: Yeah.

I: Why do you go to bed so early?

N: Well I'm tired. Yesterday I was really tired. I couldn't do the dishes cause of swimming.

I: Yeah. It's so hot too.

N: And my bed sheets are so cool.

I: Yeah. What other places do you read?

N: I read by my cat. You know there's a chair that he lies in. He sleeps in there and I sit beside him and read. It just comforts me because of his fur.

I: Ok. And at school?

N: At my desk. I don't like reading in the story corner because too many people go back there and they get talking and I can't get to sleep - I mean read.

I: Can't get to sleep either. Are you comfortable at your desk reading?

N: Yep.

I: Ok. How do you feel about sharing a book with a partner?

N: No - nobody really asks me anything so I don't know. Well one person asked me. I don't know who it was but I told him about it.

I: How about people telling you about it?

N: I don't read - I'll start reading - I'll read a little bit and see if I like it probably. I think I usually do read that book if it's good.

I: Umhmm. What about the two of you reading a book together?

N: I don't like that because sometimes if they ask you what you've read - what page you're on and then they start to read faster and you just try to catch

up to them so it doesn't - it makes you rush the book. It makes you rush and then you don't understand it.

I: Ok. Thank-you Nancy. If you think of anything else come and talk to me ok?

N: Ok.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH RHONDA'S PARENTS

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH RHONDA'S PARENTS

I: I would just like to start with you telling me your perceptions of the language arts program, what you think about it, that sort of thing.

Mrs. E: Uh, the one thing we noticed that's a little different this year has been novel studies and using their own ideas to help put interest in. I think it's been very good at putting interest in. They do much better, I think. We've been really pleased with Rhonda's progress.

I: What brought that to your attention first? Was it-?

Mrs. E: Well, maybe at the beginning of the year actually, the different, um, topics. They were allowed to choose the topics they had wanted to kind of, choose their own. So it really started at the beginning of the year.

I: Would Rhonda talk about that at home, or?

Mrs. E: Oh yeah, we heard lots about it. (laughs)

I: What kind of thing did you hear?

Mrs. E: Um, she had a little trouble to begin with, defining a topic, like narrowing it down to what she wanted to do. Um, we kind of helped

her with that, suggesting different things, and then from there, she'd go to the library and see what was available. Sometimes it was really confusing, or, um, kind of tough because she couldn't seem to find what she wanted, or maybe she'd pick too wide of a subject and once it got narrowed down a bit, then -

I: That would be a common problem of a starting writer.

Mrs. E: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

I: What about book choices?

Mrs. E: Um, you mean for her reading?

I: Yeah, when she chose a book, how did she choose it?

Mrs. E: Uh - (husband comes in to join interview and is introduced.)

I: We were just talking about the language arts program and what your perception is and what kind of things Rhonda has said at home. (Rhonda comes in) So what about the book choices? What kind of comments did you hear about book choices?

Mrs. E: You mean the books that she chose to do or what was assigned?

I: Both. Books that she chose to read and books that she was doing for novel studies.

Mrs. E: Very positive. Anything that Rhonda was involved in she really enjoyed. We thought that she was given a lot of choices as to what she could do in novel studies. This kind of thing. I think that she probably enjoyed most of her novels, didn't you?

Rhonda: Yeah.

Mrs. E: Yeah, I think, I think that they were given a whole lot more freedom as to what they could do than I've ever seen in the grades before.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: Basically, before it was you will do this topic and this is what you're going to use for resources. Um, it might be a little harder to begin with when you give them such a broad area to cover, but that's really good.

I: But you think she has responded positively?

Mrs. E: Oh, very much so.

I: She's handling the choices well?

Mrs. E: Yes, I think so.

I: Good. What kind of changes in Rhonda's reading behavior have you noticed over the past year, if any?

Mrs. E: Well, Rhonda's always liked to read so maybe not a whole lot, but she's -

Mr. E: She's a compulsive bookworm, so I don't think she had a problem with anything like that.

I: Umhmm. What about types of books? Is she reading all the same type of book or?

Mrs. E: She was for a while. She was a lot into the younger-

Mr. E: Originally-

Mrs. E: younger preteen girl kind of books. Judy Blume, that kind of thing. Now she'd rather-

Mr. E: She dropped them herself. I'd say over the past year.

Mrs. E.: Well, even over the past six months I can see a difference, too. She wants something more gripping, with more story to it.

I: Kind of adventure, or mystery or that kind of thing?

Mrs. E: Is that what you like?

Rhonda: Yeah, adventures and fantasies.

I: But, what was there about it before that you didn't enjoy? You must have tried some of it.

Rhonda: I didn't really understand it. It took too much concentration and I didn't want to spend the time. I don't know. (laughs) I just wanted to relax.

I: Now you're willing to stop and think about it, are you?

Rhonda: Yeah. (pause)_

I: What is Rhonda's usual schedule in the evening, or is there such a thing?

Mrs. E: Not, we don't have a set schedule. Normally, she'll come home from school and she'll have her hour just to unwind and do what she wants to do and then she has piano practice. That's usually before supper. If she's got homework, she'll do some of it before supper, time allowing. And then she has some responsibilities, too. She loads the dishwasher, and sets the table before supper, and after supper, she cleans up. Then usually it's homework again and then free time. Depending, like there are some nights that she just has a lot of homework if there's a

project due or something. She's excused from some of her duties around the house.

I: Umhmm. What would be favorite activities during free time?

Mrs. E: Oh (pause) I don't know. She likes to be outside, riding her bike around. This kind of weather is just right.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: Which is a nice outlet. She, um, will maybe watch t.v.. Usually in the evening, not very much after supper. The time she likes t.v. is when she comes home. It's just kind of a nice break for that hour. But a lot of evenings, Rhonda will never watch t.v.. She'll just go into her room and close her door and she'll be reading or writing letters to her friends or whatever.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: So she kind of likes being on her own for a few hours.

I: And that time is spent doing? Besides reading and writing, what else?

Mrs. E: Dreaming. (laughs)

I: (laughs) Yeah. What kind of materials do you have available in the home for reading?

Mrs. E: We have National Geographic. That's probably the main source of Rhonda's reading as far as what is in our home. Um, we don't have, like a large library ourselves. We feel that there's adequate library. This is what most of her reading is. Like she will bring home, either from the school or the public library. There's always ladies magazines around. Which, she'll pick those up occasionally. Not very often. But she'll look at styles in there, new styles, that kind of thing.

I: You mentioned the public library. Are you a regular attender?

Mrs. E: I'm not so much myself, but the kids, both the kids are.

I: About how often?

Mrs. E: About every two weeks.

I: Do you accompany the kids to the library?

Mrs. E: Not so much now. Even our son, he's seven, he's been going on his own for about the last six months or so.

Mr. E: Originally, but not as much now.

Mrs. E: If I go, I tend to direct what I think they should read. And so I stopped doing that because it's them that are interested in it-

Mr. E: That's right and they should have free choice.

Mrs. E: And I'm not interested in what he is. And it's all been magic. First it was dinosaurs, now magic. And Rhonda, I think most of your stuff comes from the school, doesn't it?

Rhonda: Yeah.

Mrs. E: Other than, uh, resource material for her-

Rhonda: Well, a lot of it I get from Ms. Samuels's room.

Mrs. E: Yeah.

I: What other types of reading materials does she read at home. You mentioned magazines, but what other materials?

Mrs. E: We read the newspaper quite often. In the morning, we'll take out the newspaper. She's got fifty minutes before she has to go to school. Other than that, there's not much other materials that she reads other than her books from school.

I: No comic books or anything like that?

Mrs. E: No.

Mr. E: We don't have any lying around. (laughs)

Mrs. E: We never read even the comics from the Saturday paper as the weeks go by and we never even look at them. And she never really - well I think for a while you were getting that one magazine. What was it called? (...) or something? It was a teen magazine.

I: Does your daughter like to read?

Mrs. E: Yes.

I: How do you know?

Mrs. E: Because she talks about it. She's always saying, "Mom, let me tell you about this story." Whatever it happens to be that she's reading, she wants to share with us. And that's one of the ways. And then she just spends a lot of time in her room looking at books.

I: Umhmm. What kind of comments might she make when she talks about her book?

Mrs. E: Oh, just something about how neat it is or, um, how much she likes it because and then she'll go into detail about it, what she likes about the book.

Rhonda: When I was reading Anne of Green Gables, I remember reading the parts that I liked.

Mrs. E: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I enjoyed her reading. Actually, it was just like reading it all over again.

I: Umhmm.

Mr. E: Rhonda can really get into detail at times.

Mrs. E: Oh, boy. (laughs)

I: So she tells you in detail about her books.

Mrs. E: Right.

I: How often would she read? Is it regularly every night, or?

Mrs. E: Well, I don't really know any more because as I said, Rhonda, in this last six months has really liked to go to her room and read there. So how much reading she has done - other than I see the change in books she brings home quite often so I know that - and we're discussing them, so I know that she does a lot of reading, but we don't actually sit with her or see her read. No.

I: Rhonda, how often do you read?

Rhonda: Um.

I: Every night? Once in a while?

Rhonda: Um, well I read quite a bit. Well I read half an hour before I go to bed.

I: Pretty well every night?

Rhonda: Yeah.

Mr. E: Yes, that's true. I've seen her doing it.

I: Do you like to read?

Mrs. E: I - I love to read, but I don't find that I have enough time any more to read as much as I'd like to. I always pick up a book, laying in bed after the news at night, and I might get fifteen minutes and my eyes close.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: But Ed of course loves to read and we used to do a lot of reading when we were just two people. I mean, we didn't even care about a t.v., we read, especially in the winter. We do more reading in the winter than in the summer.

I: Umhmm. Is there a favorite type of reading that you like?

Mrs. E: I'm not, uh. I read solely to be entertained. So it's got to be something easy (...) That kind of thing.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: Mind you, I'll read just about anything. I enjoy history, that kind of thing, I have to

think too hard to read. So it's, to me it's not relaxing.

I: How about you?

Mr. E: What kind of reading I like?

I: Umhmm.

Mr. E: I'm the other way around.

Mrs. E: Yep, he's totally opposite.

Mr. E: (laughs) I like history. (long pause) I really don't like any kind of fiction. I'm not a fiction buff for some reason or other. (long pause) I think my next most favorite kind is-

Mrs. E: You love anything about travel, different countries and

Mr. E: Travel is entertainment too. Sort of entertainment, I guess.

Rhonda: I've also seen you (...) and you pick it up and you read it and (...)

Mr. E: Which is that?

Rhonda: Science fiction books.

Mr. E: Yeah, and science fiction books if I have time, but I never have the time unfortunately. I prefer reading other things.

I: Yeah, when you're pressed for time you leave them.

Mr. E: That's right, that's right. You set your priorities.(...)

I: Umhmm. So are you able to read on a regular basis, or?

Mr. E: Ummm - I would say that perhaps - not as much as I'd like to. I spend all day with figures and books, screens, computer screens, and microfiche screens and this sort of thing so by the time I get home, I don't really feel like looking at books.

I: Yeah, I can understand that. Do you ever read with Rhonda? (pause) Together, or oral read or whatever?

Mrs. E: Ummm. Sometimes. She reads to us more now.

Mr. E: We used to.

Mrs. E: Yeah, we used to.

Mr. E: (...)

I: About when did you stop doing so?

Mrs. E: Oh about grade three or grade four.

Mr. E: Grade two or grade three. Right in there.

Mrs. E: Yeah, I suppose so.

I: Once they start reading on their own.

Mrs. E: Yes. When they really get into reading, then there's less - it's not (...)

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: We find that with Nathan now, too. He's in grade one, and just the last, oh couple of months, of course he wants a bedtime story, that's tradition, but now he's reading more than we are. And it's really nice to see. It's nice to see them like to read at that age.

I: Umhmm.

Mr. E: Yeah.

Mrs. E: It really is.

Mr. E: We find that even with him now, instead of picking up a toy a lot of the time, he's ready to pick up a book.

Mrs. E: But the kids have always been used to seeing us read in bed. When we go to bed, it's just I suppose natural for them (...) to wind down after a busy day.

Mr. E: We do it every night.

Mrs. E: Yeah, so it is encouraged.

I: Is there any other reading materials that Rhonda is exposed to in the home?

Mrs. E: Ummm. We don't buy a lot of books as I said because I think our libraries are pretty good. (pause) I can't think of anything, I don't know. She's never seemed to have lacked for interesting material. If I felt that there wasn't available, we'd certainly, you know, have something.

I: Umhmm. Do you send them to the library or do they go on their own?

Mrs. E: Oh no, they go on their own.

I: And they go when they're -

Mrs. E: When they're finished their book. Or when it's due usually, which is tonight with Nathan's book. I'd better scoot him out of here.

I: Any concerns about Rhonda's reading ability or writing ability?

Mrs. E: No, at the beginning of the year, she did have some - some problem drawing her thoughts together. She knew what she wanted, but it was to get it all together.

I: Umhmm.

Mrs. E: There's been just so much improvement. She's much more self-confident about being able to do it now.

I: What about reading?

Mrs. E: Reading is no problem. Uh, I don't think it's ever been a problem with Rhonda. Her interests are just expanding more all the time.

I: Umhmm. Are you concerned at all about skills, for example, vocabulary building, word decoding, that sort of thing?

Mrs. E: No. I haven't uh - I'm not aware of any great problem in that area. She seems - like she reads back to me sentences that she's structured and I think she's got them put together. I think they're quite - quite average for a person her age with the experience she's got.

I: Umhmm. And you have no concern about that the school's been lacking in developing those skills then?

Mr. E: I think they've done a fairly commendable job. Judging from what I see here at home.

I: Umhmm. That's good. Are there any other comments that you - like Rhonda's been in this program for two years now, hasn't she?

Mrs. E: Umhmm.

I: Any general comments you have about things that you've seen - any differences you've noticed over the two years. Or any comments you've heard about the program or?

Mrs. E: Well, we've just been very satisfied. I suppose it depends on the student, too. Maybe if our son was in it, we'd have a different view on it. If he wasn't responding as well, we'd look into it more closely. I think parents often do that. When things go along fairly well, we don't delve into it as much because your child is getting what he needs. But we've been very satisfied with it because she's - she's had her rough spots where she's been kind of disappointed and didn't think she could handle it, but she's had a lot of support from Ms. Samuels and it's worked very well.

I: Were you in Ms. Samuels's room last year, Rhonda?

Rhonda: No, I was in Mrs. McKay's.

I: Oh, you were. (pause)

Mrs. E: I think the teachers expect a lot. I think they set their standards pretty high.

I: Too high?

Mrs. E: Well, sometimes maybe, but then that's speaking as a parent. I think you're always thinking that maybe they're a little hard on my kid. But they seem to have, as a group, have done very well.

I: Even from the beginning?

Mrs. E: Yes.

Mr. E: I think Rhonda, uh, was a little bit concerned about the program and various things. She was feeling frustrated and was sometimes a little hard to live with.

I: Umhmm. What parts would cause more frustration?

Mr. E: (long pause) Can you answer that one?

Rhonda: Well does this have to do with language arts?

I: Yes. What parts were most frustrating?

Rhonda: Well, a lot of the difference - well I had this program last year too - and I'm just starting to enjoy report writing.

I: Umhmm. Why is that?

Rhonda: Well, I get - I get so frustrated because I have all this information and (...) and I can't seem to get it done. (...)

Mr. E: It's something that (...)

I: I think sometimes most of us get frustrated with that.

Rhonda: Yeah, I have this story too and it's taking me months to get it done. (laughs)

I: And you haven't read it in author's chair yet, or did you?

Rhonda: No, I'm going tomorrow.

I: You're going tomorrow. Good for you.

Rhonda: And also choosing topics was something I was really frustrated about because I was - like I wrote a story about my brother and a story about my cousin and they were both nonfiction and I wasn't satisfied at all because I wanted to do something - um - (...) and uh, Ms. Samuels just gave me a suggestion to do a mystery story and I wrote about the Herb House and -

I: You've been doing a lot of work on that one. Have you had a chance to see that?

Mrs. E: Oh yes. I've heard it in quite a few forms.

I: And how do you feel about it? Her story?

Mrs. E: Oh, I - I think it's super. Because I compare it to what I could do and it's far better than what I could do. It just never was my strong subject. (laughs)

I: (laughs) I know what you mean.

Mrs. E: So I just think it's super and there-there'll be times when she's used a particular word to describe something and maybe we can find a word that's more suitable, and let her think of what it might be. But that's the only input I've had is, you know, she's come up with the whole idea and progressed along the way and I've found it very entertaining. Of course, I can relate to it because I know what she's talking about and I just really enjoy it.

I: It's good that you're able to share that.

Mrs. E: Yes, yes, she asks us all for different topics so-

I: And you told me you don't support her very much in her reading.

Mrs. E: Well - (laughs) I think you - I think I can always support her more than I do, but then on the other hand too, I feel they - they know that we're here to support them but they have to work through it too. I wouldn't dream of sitting down and doing the project for my child because it's wrong for me and it's more wrong for them.

I: And somewhere we have to meet those frustrations and overcome them.

Mrs. E: Exactly. So why wait until we get to high school to find out that, you know, we have to learn.

I: Well thank you very much. You've been very helpful to me.

APPENDIX F

TRANSCRIPTION OF A GROUP NOVEL STUDY

TRANSCRIPTION OF GROUP NOVEL STUDY - THE CAY

Part I of the transcript was recorded on June 4; Part II was recorded on June 9. Craig was absent on June 4.

PART I - JUNE 4

Jerry: I don't understand when the author has sort of skipped from a torpedo blowing up the boat to when - to when they were on the island. I didn't get that. That's what I have.

Ken: You mean in other words it went too fast for you? Like-

Jerry: Well the first part it went shwup pow and then he was on the island.

Ken: No - I think - I think it was an explosion, then on to the raft, then the island. That's how I remember it going. (long pause)

Jerry: (reading) "We were torpedoed (...) and the officer" (mumbles) "about a long time." It just said, it just went (reads) "the boat tilted downward and the next thing I knew we were all in the water. I saw my mother near me and I yelled to her. Then something hit me from above. A long time later, four hours I

was told, I opened my eyes to see a blue sky above." And that's the way I -

Ken: Well he, I, no it's not the island. I think-

Jerry: No.

Ken: He must have been hit on the head but did you read the - is that where the chapter ends?

Jerry: No.

Ken: Well, just, just -

Jerry: Well when you read on, see, its' the (reading) "Young bass, how you feelin? I turned my head. I saw a very old Negro sitting on the raft near -" Oh. (laughs) Ok. I just didn't get that part.

Ken: Sometimes you have to search over a part one or two times to kinda click in your head. (pause) I thought it was interesting that the author wrote on the subject. That's what I have. I don't know. Let's go to the next one.

Jerry: Ok. Um - Do you like this book so far?

Ken: It is - it is quite interesting because most people write books where they, you know, it's kinda easy to find the research on and all this, but -

Jerry: But this is pretty hard.

Ken: Yeah, like, World War II and, World War II, that's, that's quite hard to write on, and I think it'll be interesting to find out how he - how the story builds up.

Jerry: Ok. You ask a question.

Ken: Ok. (pause) I shouldn't ask this cause you already said in your summary. I said, "Do you like the boo- Do you like what you're reading so far? If so, why? You already - you already told that in your summary.

Jerry: Oh well, it's, it's, it's great. It's - I think it's one of the -

Ken: Good books, right?

Jerry: (sounding surprised) No, I think it's the best book I've ever read. It's even better than Lord of the Rings, I'd say.

Ken: Why do you feel that it's the best book you ever read?

Jerry: I've read a lot of books but - um - I just -

Ken: This one seems to -

Jerry: This - this - this is really good.

Ken: Do you like the way the author set it out or what?

Jerry: Yeah, I like everything about it, it's great.

Ken: Interesting.

Jerry: Ok. What do you think will happen next?

Ken: After the raft?

Jerry: Yeah.

Ken: Well - I have a feeling they'll drift for a long time and from the cover, I know they'll reach the island. From the cover, I know they'll reach the island.

Jerry: You read this book?

Ken: No (pause) no, but it's kinda easy to tell that they'll reach land from the cover.

Jerry: Yeah. What do you think will happen after that?

Ken: I don't know. I think that'll be quite hard.

Jerry: Yeah, ok. (Loudly) Ms. Samuels, we're done.

Ken: I haven't asked my last question yet.

Jerry: Oh. Ok.

Ken: Do you think that - do you think this would take a lot of research and how would you do it?

Jerry: It would take a lot of research. It would cause (pause). No I don't think it would - it might. It would be kinda hard I think.

Ken: But I think the first bit is all researched and I think the second is just kind of - is just kind of out of your own head.

Jerry: Yeah - Well I guess that's it for discussion.

Ken: How much - how much do -

Jerry: Three chapters, three chapters.

Ken: Let's check how long the three chapters -

Jerry: Ok. Ok.

Ken: We just shouldn't have big, big chunks-

Jerry: Yes, we should have big, big chunks. Ok, (flipping through pages) ok, four, five, six - not very long.

Ken: How many pages?

Jerry: Ok. 1,2,3.....13 - 16.

Ken: That's only three more pages right?

Jerry: 16?

Ken: The last chapter ends on 15. The other chapter is only 3.

Jerry: Yep.

Ken: Ok. What the heck.

Jerry: Ok.

Ken: Ok. I enjoyed it.

Jerry: All right.

Ken: Three more chapters - Ahhh!

PART II - JUNE 9

Jerry: What chapters were we supposed to read?

Ken: 7, 8, and 9.

Craig: I remember you reading them, Jerry.

Jerry: I know. I did read them.

Ken: But you didn't do your summary and questions. Right? Right?

Craig: Cause he's got to re-look at them.

Jerry: No.

Ken: You - you read like greased lightning. In ten minutes you've finished the three chapters.

Jerry: Oh, right.

Ken: You always do that. And then you give it to me to read and it takes me two days to do it.

Craig: Well, where's your book?

Ken: I don't know. It was on my desk one day when I went home and when I came back it was gone.

Jerry: Oh, ok. I read this. This is when - when they get on the island and they have to make the raft and - I mean they're making the-

Ken: Shelter.

Jerry: Shelter.

Ken: And he's got to get used to the island because he can't see a thing.

Craig: I - I know why.

Jerry: Yeah. He got mad at the old man.

Craig: Let's read up to chapter 15. I've read the book before.

Jerry: 15?

Craig: Yeah. I've read the book before and those are the mose exciting chapters.

Ken: Five chapters?

Craig: No, yeah five.

Jerry: Five chapters?

Craig: It's awesome. Look through them. It's awe - it's really neat.

Ken: Oh, yeah.

Craig: Where'd we leave off? We left off at -

Ken: Chapter 10.

Craig: It starts - at the end of chapter 9. Like they just started being friends again after - they yelled at each other and then-

Jerry: Ms. Samuels, I didn't do mine.

Ms. S: Then you can't join the group discussion. You know that. Hurry up.

Jerry: I know. I know. I read it, but-

Ken: I'm done.

Ms. S: Ok, you two are done?

Ken: I always seem to be finished. I don't know why.

Ms. S: So today - it's just been you and Jerry. Today it'll just be you and Craig. Let's see if you can have a really good discussion like you have been.

Craig: Ok. I'll read my summary.

Ken: No, let's do your questions first.

Craig: Ok.

Ken: Ask a question.

Craig: Question. Do you think Phillip's opinion of the Blacks has changed? Why?

Ken: I - I feel that his opinion has changed because - um - he has to - he has to depend on him - he has to - like - just, you know - he has to depend on Timothy a lot more than he would on any other person. So because he's - he's going past the color, cause he's blind so it's just like saying - talk - say you could be pink with purple polka-dots. I could be blind and I think you're a perfectly good person, but then when I saw you, I go - yech - you - you know.

Craig: Is it a nice purple?

Ken: Well, you know. I think he has changed.

Craig: I think he has yellow stripes.

Ken: My question?

Craig: You - you could think a person wearing a yellow polka-dotted bikini was ugly and then you look and you go "Wow!"

Ken: (laughs)

Craig: Ok. You read your question.

Ken: Ok. What might have been you reaction when - when they hit the island. You know, when they got to the island. What would you - what would your reaction be?

Craig: Oh. I'll tell you my reaction the first time I read it. The first time was they said it was really neat - I thought it was good because there might be a storm or something. I think it was better for them, cause on the raft they could hit a hurricane or something.

Ken: Yeah, and I feel - yeah, and I also think that the island is a lot better. Because the raft - the space was so limited, cause from what they said the raft was say another one of these tables put together - about that big. And that's not a lot of room. I know on the island, they'll be a lot safer because, you

know, they have room to wander around and stretch and there's trees and coconuts around.

Craig: About a mile, yeah.

Ken: Umhmm. And I think they might find a - I think there might be some rock formation or something where fish or -

Craig: Coral. They said that in chapter -

Ken: Oh, that's right. Dumb me. Oh, well. Ok. Ask a question.

Craig: Would you able - Would you be able to survive on a deserted island? Do you think you would be?

Ken: D - Depends on the situation. Can I see or can't I see?

Craig: You can see, yeah.

Ken: Oh, ok. I probably - I don't know. I think I could survive on a deserted island probably.

Craig: I could. I could survive on a deserted island if I had one tool. Like with a - like with one tool-

Jerry: Hi.

Craig: Like if I had a knife or if I had - um - a sharp rock. That's all I'd need. But if I - if it's - if I don't have - like -

Ken: All you really need is say -

Jerry: A sharp rock.

Ken: Yeah. Now if you had to keep me on the island one - one deserted island for a month with one thing, give me one of those Rambo knives. Those would be handy.

Craig: Yeah, I got - I can get those.

Jerry: Survival knife.

Craig: You know how much they cost? I looked up -

Jerry: Ten bucks.

Craig: In the back of the (...) guide. The cost is about $22. I can get them for $5. I know where. It's at a mail order - from Oxford.

Ken: I know I've seen them for $10, but -

Jerry: Can I read my summary?

Ken: No - sure, sure, if you want to.

Jerry: Ok. Summary. They made it to the island and they were starting to make a shelter by weaving fibre together. Timothy made Phillip do work even though he was blind and - they - and Phillip yelled at Timothy and - and now they're mad at each other.

Ken: Umhmm. Summary - ask a question.

Jerry: How do you think Timothy feels after Phillip yelled at him?

Craig: Happy. (laughs) No. It says at the end of the chapter they're still friends. It says that at the end of the chapter.

Ken: Yeah, but I feel - I feel - I think I feel that Timothy feels - I don't know - kind of - I don't know - like kind of a big weight's been lifted off his chest because - what's the guy's name?

Jerry: Phillip

Ken: Phillip. Phillip yelled at him because, I think Phillip had a whole bunch of anger inside of him, just waiting to blow up. That's what I feel. I feel he was just really, really mad and he had to get it out.

Jerry: I don't think that he had a bunch of anger inside of him. I don't because, I don't know why.

Craig: I tnink - I think it was - um - to see if he said that - if he said what he did, he'd prob - he'd - he'd think, "Oh, Mom was right." But once he said it then he found out that his mom was wrong.

Ken: Yeah, I think he feels a lot better about saying that. Even though he did get mad at Timothy, I think he feels better inside.

Jerry: Well my question was how does Timothy feel.

Ken: Oh, Timothy. Well -

Craig: Well he feels - he feels -

Ken: I think -

Craig: I think he guessed that - um -

Ken: He was going to blow up eventually -

Craig: That there was a-

Jerry: Cause my question said, "How do you think Timothy feels after Phillip yelled at him?"

Ken: Well, I think that Timothy says, "Well, I was expecting this and here it came."

Jerry: Well, I don't think he was expecting it.

Craig: Well, he was - he was expecting like -

Jerry: Well?

Craig: Something - Like he seemed kinda tense. I think he thinks that - um - what Phillip thinks - um - I got it out that he's going to like black people from now on.

Jerry: Ok, so we answered that question.

Craig: I asked my two.

Ken: You only asked one.

Craig: I've asked two.

Ken: Ok (long pause) Oh, yeah. Do you - Do you suppose - suppose Timothy - Do you suppose Timothe is treating Phillip as if he was higher? If so - Let me say this again, ok? Do you suppose Timothy is - is treating the boy as if he was higher? If so -

Craig: He was until the end of the chapter. Now he's calling him "Young bass"

Ken: He always calls him "Young bass"

Craig: No, now he calls him "Philleepe"

Ken: Oh yeah, that's right, that was a dumb question. Philleepe.

Jerry: Philleepe

Craig: Philleepe

Jerry: Philleepe

Ken: I always - I think it's neat, the way he talks. He goes, "Philleepe, Young bass, Spell with de rocks."

Craig: Ok. Let's go. I'm done.

Jerry: Wait, I haven't asked my second question.

Ken: Ok.

Jerry: Do you think they will become friends again? Why or why not?

Craig: That was answered in the last sentence, "Timothy, will you be my friend again?" "Yes Philleepe."

Jerry: No, it doesn't.

Craig: It says, "Yes, I've always been your friend."

Jerry: Oh, ok.

Craig: And then - see it says right around here somewhere.

Jerry: Ok, ok, ok.

Craig: Let's read to Chapter 15.

Jerry: I'm wrong.

Craig: Why not.

Jerry: To chapter 15!

Craig: It's really short. I'll tell you how many pages it it. It's -

Ken: See it says, "Yay Philleepe." In my book someone wrote that in. Ok. How many pages is that?

Craig: Well, it's not much.

Ken: How many pages? How many pages from about chapter 10 to 15?

Craig: 33 to - That's -

Jerry: 33 to what?

Craig: 73 to 106. That's - and we - Chapter 9 to -

Jerry: 33 pages.

Ken: Oh, geez. That's a lot of reading.

Craig: That's one chapter in our -

Jerry: No it isn't. That's one chapter in Lord of the Rings. One chapter.

Craig: We - that's what we read last time.

Jerry: Yeah.

Craig: It was, cause these chapters are really short. That's what we read last time. The same amount. Look.

Ken: Ok, I don't know. Ok, I don't know. This is an interesting book anyway.

Jerry: Ok.

Craig: It'll be easy to do, Ian.

Jerry: I get to read.

Ken: Yeah, you get to read first.